



Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (ERUUF)

Approved by Executive Team 6/19/08

Approved by BOT 11/18/08

CHILD AND YOUTH SAFE CONGREGATION POLICIES

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Policies Preface

The Child and Youth Protection Policies of Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship are developed based on:

- Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte North Carolina Policies;
- Existing ERUUF policies;
- Policies recommended by the Unitarian Universalist Association;
- Policy models provided by other congregations;
- The advice of experts in the field of safety, insurance, social services and education; and
- The Task Force on Safe Congregation Deliberations (January – April 2008)

Prevention is our major goal in child and youth protection. Education of the congregation, staff and minors as to the complexities of abuse will improve the safety of our youth. However, when an incident does occur our response will fall within the areas of truth, compassion, support, affirmation and protection against further harm. These Policies will help protect our minors, and will also protect our paid and volunteer staff from the possibility of unfounded accusations. The polices are intended to assure complete compliance with North Carolina State and Federal laws and, in the case of conflict between the Policies and these laws, the laws will govern.

The ERUUF Lead Minister will assume overall responsibility for implementation of the Child and Youth Protection Policies and development of associated Procedures and Guidelines.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The members of ERUUF seek to create an environment in which the safety and well-being of our staff, members, children and friends are actively supported. Prevention of harm –either intentional or unintentional- is critical to this effort. Therefore, the congregation must identify situations and/or individuals that may indicate an increased risk of harm to others. Furthermore, the congregation must support policies and procedures that will eliminate and/or minimize this risk. For the purposes of the "Child and Youth Safe Congregation Policies", the following definitions are applied:

Child and Youth Abuse Definitions:

The UUA defines child abuse as “an act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust that harms or threatens to harm a child's well-being or physical or mental health.” Child abuse is also against the law.

There are four categories of child abuse according to the UUA:

Physical Abuse: Deliberately inflicting bodily harm to a child.

Sexual Abuse: Engaging in sexualized behavior, verbal or physical, with a child; using a child for the sexual gratification of an adult or older child. Any time a child is used for the sexual stimulation of another person, abuse has occurred. The child is powerless either to consent to or resist such sexual acts. Child sexual abuse is illegal regardless of whether the child "consents" or not. Consent is not an issue. The offender bears the entire responsibility for the abuse whatever form it takes.

Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the actions. Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects. Types of abuse that do not involve touching could include statements intended to seduce children, obscene phone calls, pornographic videos, or exhibitionism; inappropriate conversations/dialogue in person or by phone or written communication (i.e. letter, email, text message).

Emotional Abuse: Emotional abuse may be very difficult to identify and document. Emotional abuse deeply affects a child's self-esteem by subjecting a child to verbal assault or emotional cruelty. It can include close confinement, inadequate nurturance, extreme discipline, or deliberately permitting destructive behaviors such as drug or alcohol abuse.

Neglect: Children have basic physical, nutritional, and environmental needs that must be supplied. Withholding of food, clothing, medication, and proper living quarters, as well as abandonment are all acts of neglect. Neglect can include physical, emotional, or educational neglect through such actions as inadequate supervision, health hazards in the home, refusing to seek treatment for illnesses, providing inadequate emotional nurturance, and deliberately permitting chronic truancy.

Terms Definitions

1. **Parent** – a natural or adoptive parent or legal guardian of a child or youth.
2. **Paid Staff** – any person hired by ERUUF to work with children and/or youth.
3. **Volunteer Staff** – any non-paid person who works with our children and/or youth.
4. **Leader** – any individual approved by the DRE to be responsible for children and/or youth.
5. **Child** – typically, any minor below the age of 12.
6. **Youth** – typically, any minor between, and including, the ages of 12 and 17, or any minor who is still in high school.

7. **Minor** – both children and youth collectively (when child or youth is noted in lieu of minor, the policy only applies to them and not the other).
8. **Travel** – Transport to any ERUUF activity away from ERUUF property.
9. **Serious Accident or Illness** – one that requires medical or dental care.
10. **Known Offender** – an individual who has been convicted of child abuse, reckless endangerment of a minor, or any sexual offenses. See:
<http://www.jus.state.nc.us/NCJA/SEXOFFEN.pdf>
11. **Publication** – documents sent through the mail, or similar delivery service; printed in newspapers, or other similar documents; or posted to a web site or sent via email.
12. **Harassment** – verbal or non-verbal abuse or ridicule, offensive physical contact, displaying or distributing pornographic or offensive materials, attempted or actual intimate physical contact, demanding favors (sexual or otherwise), or hazing.
13. **Procedures** – the basic implementation of the policies, define specific actions and activities based upon the Policies. These must happen. (i.e. Volunteer application and screening)
14. **Guidelines** – less prescriptive than procedures, these are meant to assist where procedures are not specific. These should happen. (i.e. name tags in classrooms)
15. **High Risk Individuals:** Includes any Known Offender or individuals being actively investigated for High Risk Behavior or any one working with the DRE and/or Lead minister to resolve an allegation of misconduct. The Lead Minister and/or the DRE may also designate an individual as "high risk" should information about the individual indicate a risk of harm to themselves or others.
16. **High-Risk Behaviors** include, but are not limited to:
 - a. actions, and/or words that indicate an individual may pose a considerable risk of harm to others or themselves.
 - b. sexual abuse, assault, and/or physical abuse or assault and related crimes.
 - c. a felony that involves weapons, physical violence, and/or stalking behaviors
 - d. a history of sexual victimization and/or assault of infant, child, or adolescent.
 - e. a history of current and/or untreated sexually-reactive behaviors.
17. **High-Risk Situation** includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. A situation and/or environment in which a minor is alone in the presence of another adult;
 - b. A minor is in the presence of another minor, or minors, without an adult being present;

c. A minor is in the presence of a high-risk individual, regardless of who else is present.

18. **Risk Areas and Activities:** An area or activity which poses potential harm to individuals. These will be identified in attachment. (Attachment)

Policy Overview

Policy 1 – Administration Policy

- The Lead Minister (LM) is responsible for the care and nurturing of this religious community and thus ultimately is responsible for overseeing the Child and Youth Safe Congregation Policy. The Director of Religious Education (DRE) is responsible for implementing the Child & Youth Safe Congregation Policies (Policies) in accordance with the supervision of the Lead Minister. The Lead Minister can delegate responsibilities to others, where minors are exposed to risk outside of the Religious Education area. Other communities within ERUUF (Music, small group ministries, etc) will be expected to develop procedures, in consultation with the LM, which clearly adhere to these Policies.
- The Membership Coordinator will work with the Lead Minister, DRE or others; to be sure dissemination of information regarding members and activities is comprehensive.
- Other ERUUF committees and councils may provide support, including conflict resolution.
- Parent involvement is critical to the effectiveness of the Policies.
- The ERUUF Board of Trustees and Executive Team approve the Policies and the DRE develops the associated Procedures and Guidelines, in consultation with leaders of other communities within ERUUF whom have contact with minors.
- The LM/DRE will periodically assess the effectiveness of the Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, but is dependent on the professional staff, volunteers and parents to assure that everyone follows the policies, procedures and guidelines.
- If an incident occurs, confidentiality and control of communications are necessary to protect all the parties involved.

Policy 2 – Recruitment, Training and Educational Policy

- All staff and volunteers must complete applications and sign a covenant agreeing to adhere to the Policies, Procedures and Guidelines and giving permission for random background checks. (Attachment)

- Background checks will be performed annually on 10% of the volunteer staff. Annual evaluations will be performed of each paid and volunteer staff having contact with minors to assess their capability to work with our minors. Background data information, Known Offender information and incident reports will be maintained by the Administrator. (Budget)
- The DRE will work with appropriate Councils and Committees and interest groups at ERUUF to develop and/or implement educational programs for minors (age appropriate); staff, volunteers and the congregation.
- The Policies, Procedures and Guidelines will be available to staff, volunteer and parent and appropriate training will be provided as needed.
- All staff and volunteers will have education/training thru ERUUF which focuses on the policies and procedures, implementation expectations, laws regarding reporting of abuse/neglect and other aspects of child and youth protection. (Budget)
- Agencies providing contract infant/child care for non-RE activities will be vetted to the same standard as paid and volunteer staff.

Policy 3 – Safety & Health Protection Policy

- Parents must complete applications for each minor, including emergency contact names and numbers, as well as any special needs or restrictions. (Attachment)
- First aid kits will be available and emergency evacuation maps will be posted. A fire drill will be held at least once per year.
- Guidelines will be developed for leader-to-minor ratios, safety and health rules, and release of children after RE classes or events, and administering medication.
- Facility inspections will be performed yearly to find and correct safety and health hazards.

Policy 4 – Travel Safety Protection Policy

- Drivers will be qualified to transport minors and be 25 years of age.
- Leaders will have emergency information for each minor and will be responsible for the minors assigned to them.
- The DRE will determine if additional, special rules are required for the trip and all drivers will be trained on any applicable rules.

Policy 5 – Physical, Emotional and Sexual Abuse Protection Policy

- Corporal punishment will never be used to discipline a minor.
- Behavioral guidelines, based on Unitarian Universalist Principles, will be developed for both minors and for leader(s).
- Neither harassment nor implied physical, emotional or sexual abuse will be tolerated.
- There must be at least two leaders with the minors at all times, except in special situations where the individual leader and minor must be in plain sight or hearing distance of other leader(s).

- Any leader(s) or minor(s) accused of having abused a minor will be treated as a High Risk Individual until the incident has been completely resolved.
- Guidelines will be developed for publication of minor pictures and names and for supervision of minors during overnight events.
- Caregivers in infant nursery will be given additional training and information regarding the specific care of infants. (Budget)

Policy 6 – High Risk Individual Protection Policy

- Known Offenders must make their status known to the ERUUF Minister(s).
- The ERUUF Lead Minister and DRE together will be responsible for determining if an individual is a high risk to our minors and vulnerable members of the congregation, and for developing a plan to assure that they do not come in contact with the minors.
- Anyone who has reason to believe that someone in the congregation is abusing or trying to abuse a minor will confidentially advise the ERUUF DRE and/or Lead Minister who will investigate the concern.

Policy 7 – Incident Management Policy

- Immediate care will be given to minors who are affected by an accident, health or abuse incident, including seeking professional treatment if needed.
- A written incident report will be filed and the DRE will take the lead in notifying parents and authorities as required.
- Each incident will be evaluated by the DRE or the authorities and lessons learned will be documented as part of the incident report.

1. Administration Policy

A) Policies and Procedures Responsibilities

- 1) The ERUUF Director of Religious Education (DRE), in consultation with the Lead Minister, shall assume primary responsibility for implementation of the Policies and development of Procedures and Guidelines as relates to the religious education area.
 - (a) All areas within the ERUUF Community where minors have exposure to risk (music, performance, covenant groups, Café ERUUF, fund raising activities, etc.) will be identified by the DRE and/or the LM.

- (b) Responsible leaders in these other areas of exposure, in consultation with the DRE, will develop and implement Procedures and Guidelines adherent to the Policies. These will be reviewed and maintained with the DRE, Executive Team and other appropriate leaders.
- 2) The Membership Coordinator will assist the LM and/or DRE and others in compiling information on members and their potential interactions with minor(s) of ERUUF.
- 3) The ERUUF Religious Education Council and/or the Executive Team shall resolve any conflicts that may arise between the DRE and others on the implementation of the Policies, Procedures and Guidelines.
- 4) The DRE may select others to assist her/him with implementation of the Policies, Procedures and Guidelines and assign responsibilities to them as needed.
- 5) Parents and all congregants shall take an active role in the implementation of the Policies, Procedures and Guidelines.

B) Policies and Procedures Development and Approval

- 1) The Safe Congregation Task Force (appointed by the Lead Minister) will develop the initial Policies.
- 2) The ERUUF Board of Trustees shall approve the Policies and any subsequent changes in the Policies.
- 3) To develop the associated Procedures and Guidelines, the DRE may select a working group to assist her/him. The DRE is expected to involve leaders in areas where minors could be at risk outside of the “traditional” Religious Education areas. The DRE shall approve the Procedures and Guidelines and may make changes to the Procedures and Guidelines. The Executive Team will review the Procedures and Guidelines. Any changes will be documented with written justification and the Executive Team will be made aware of the changes.
- 4) Parents shall sign a covenant agreeing to abide by the Policies, Procedures and Guidelines and to take appropriate actions to assure compliance by their minors.

C) Policies, Procedures And Guidelines Assessment and Improvement

- 1) The Lead Minister shall lead annual assessments of the Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, with the support of the DRE, ERUUF Religious Education Council, teams of advisors and/or special task forces, as necessary.

- 2) The DRE shall periodically assess the Procedures implementation to assure compliance by staff and volunteers, and to provide clarification of requirements and guidance on best implementation practices.
- 3) Parents, staff and volunteers shall assist one another by recognizing situations where the Policies and Procedures are not being properly implemented, and provide feedback to help determine how to address specific situations.
- 4) If concerns about Policies and Procedures implementation cannot be mutually resolved by those using it, then a complaint shall be submitted to the DRE.
- 5) Fellowship staff and volunteer leaders, as well as parents, have the right to enter any child/youth function to assure that Policies and Procedures are being properly implemented.

D) Documentation, Confidentiality, and Communication

- 1) Incidence reports and other relevant documents shall be maintained by the Administrator in locked file cabinets for a period of at least 3 years. Access to the documents shall be on a need-to-know basis as determined by the LM and Administrator. (Budget)
- 2) The details of a specific accusation or complaint shall be treated in complete confidence with only a need-to-know basis for their release. The DRE and / or ERUUF Lead Minister shall determine the timing and extent of disclosure of information unless directed otherwise by law enforcement, other government agencies or insurance company authorities.
- 3) Communication with the public, (e.g., the media), on specific incidents shall be managed by the ERUUF Lead Minister.

2. Recruitment Training and Educational Policies

Recruitment:

The following apply to **all** staff and volunteers who will work with our children and youth:

- a) Each volunteer shall be screened and complete an application providing details for background checks, a summary of their qualifications, a release to perform background checks and a signed covenant stating that they understand and will comply with the Policies and Procedures. (Attachment)

- b) The DRE, or appointed other, shall perform an evaluation of each individual to determine how they may best work with children and youth, as well as to determine if limits need to be applied to their interaction with minors.
- c) A copy of the Policies shall be made available to each family, along with staff and volunteers, for self-study.
- d) A copy of the Procedures shall be maintained at ERUUF for reference by parents, staff and volunteers.
- e) When contract agencies are used for Non-RE related infant and child care, they will be held to the same standards as the paid/volunteer staff at ERUUF.

Education and Training:

- a) The DRE shall assure training related to the policies, procedures and guidelines is provided to all paid and volunteer staff on an annual basis before they start in the classroom.
- b) The DRE will develop/implement age appropriate education about sexuality and abuse so that minors are empowered to protect themselves and report abuse.
- c) Information and training on child abuse and safe congregation policies will be provided to the congregation.

3. Safety & Health Protection Policy

- a) Parents shall complete an annual registration application for each minor, including emergency contacts, insurance information, summaries of allergies, special diet instructions and other key information as identified by the DRE.
- b) Parents shall advise the DRE of any concerns associated with their minor. Together, they will work out a plan to address these issues and will advise the teachers or youth advisors so that they can be proactive in fulfilling the plan.
- c) First aid kits shall be made available to staff /volunteers in convenient, defined locations. Maps showing escape routes shall be posted in key locations so that each group knows what exit to take and where they are to assemble afterwards. Fire drills shall be held at least annually.
- d) Guidelines shall be established for ratios of leaders-to-minor, based on such factors as ages of the minors and specific activities.

- e) Staff, volunteers and minors shall adhere to established safety and health rules, including completion of incident reports, which shall be explained to them as needed throughout the year.
- f) Release of children to the responsibility of others shall be in accordance with established procedures, as well as in accordance with parental requests.
- g) Medications shall be administered to minors only in accordance with established procedures (i.e. overnight events), including parental permission.
- h) An inspection of the Fellowship buildings and grounds shall take place at least annually to assure that the physical surroundings are in compliance with the Policies and Procedures and any applicable insurance company and regulatory requirements. Risk Areas and Activities will be identified and classified as to high, medium and low risk. Procedures will be in place to minimize risk in these areas.

4. Travel Safety Protection Policy

- a) Drivers transporting minors shall: be at least twenty-five (25) years of age, have a valid driver's license; have active automotive liability insurance; and be qualified to operate the vehicle that they will drive. The DRE may perform motor vehicle record searches as needed to assess the driver's ability to safely transport our minors.
- b) Guidelines shall be developed for managing minors when traveling, including keeping emergency contact information provided by the parents with the leaders responsible for the specific minors.
- c) The DRE, or designated other if the trip is not Religious Education related, shall determine special child and youth protection rules, if any, for the trip and advise all staff and volunteers who will accompany the minors.
- d) All safety precautions and minor behavior guidelines shall be reviewed with the minors before the trip and as needed thereafter.

5. Physical, Emotional and Sexual Abuse Protection Policy

- a) Corporal punishment shall never be used to discipline a minor.
- b) The Unitarian Universalist Principles shall be followed by all staff and volunteers working with our minors. Behavior guidelines, based on UU Principles, shall be established for staff, volunteers, and minors.

- c) Members of the congregation, staff, volunteers and minors shall never emotionally harass any minor or adult, or threaten or imply physical, verbal or sexual action, even in jest.
- d) There shall be at least two leaders with the minors at all times, except in special situations where the individual leader and minor must be in plain sight or hearing distance of other leader(s). Mentoring programs that do not meet these requirements may be arranged however a higher level of scrutiny will be used when evaluating potential participants.
- e) Anyone accused of abuse or anyone who repeatedly harasses a minor shall be treated as though they are a High Risk Individual until the DRE has completed their evaluation, which may include investigations by law enforcement, other government agencies and/or insurance authorities.
- f) Publication of minor pictures, as well as listing their names and other pertinent information, (e.g., phone numbers), shall be approved by their parents as well as limited by guidelines.
- g) Staff and volunteers shall adhere to established guidelines for supervising minors during overnight events, including appropriate separation of youth during sleep times and other privacy measures.

6. Reporting Incidences, Suspicions or High Risk Individuals

- a) Known Offenders (KO) shall make their status known to the ERUUF Lead Minister, along with any terms of their probation, parole or special instructions of the Court. <http://www.jus.state.nc.us/NCJA/SEXOFFEN.pdf>
- b) Anyone who knows of a Known Offender in the congregation, or otherwise has reason to believe that an individual should not be in contact with minors, shall advise the ERUUF Lead Minister.
- c) Anyone who has reason to believe that someone in the congregation is abusing or trying to abuse a minor will confidentially advise the ERUUF DRE and/or the Lead Minister who will investigate the concern.
- d) The Lead Minister and DRE, collectively, shall assure that those who they believe could be a possible threat to our minors are not on the list of approved staff and volunteers maintained by the DRE. The Lead Minister shall work with the DRE to develop a plan for each High Risk Individual (HRI) or Known Offender to assure that the individual does not have access to a minor(s). It is understood that a minor(s) could also be a HRI. If a minor(s) are deemed HRI, the minor(s) and the parents/guardians will be involved in developing the plan and will agree to aid in enforcement of the plan. High Risk Individuals/Known Offenders will be required to follow the Lead Minister/DRE's plan to assure no access to a minor(s).

- e) The ERUUF Lead Minister shall take appropriate action to counsel, or refer to other counselors, High Risk Individuals to assist them with coping with their illness, as well as to supervise the adherence to their limited access plan.
- f) Anyone who has reason to believe that a High Risk Individual has attempted to access minor(s), or otherwise has disregarded rules that limit their access, shall advise the ERUUF Lead Minister.
- g) Should a High Risk Individual/ Known Offender fail to adhere to their plan, or otherwise become an unacceptable risk, the ERUUF Lead Minister shall require that the individual not return to ERUUF or any off-site ERUUF function

7. Incident Management Policy

- b) In all accidents, health and abuse incidents, the leaders responsible for the minor shall advise the DRE and/or the Lead Minister.
- c) To the best of their ability, responsible leaders shall perform first aid and provide emotional support to the affected minor until further help arrives.
- d) In cases of an accident, the DRE or appointed leader shall determine if professional help is required beyond the first aid that can be administered at the time. The medical and/or dental contacts on the minor's application shall be notified. Activation of the Emergency Medical System (Call 911) will be accomplished where necessary.
- e) The parents will be contacted in cases of serious accidents, illnesses or incidents of abuse. Other staff and volunteers not directly associated with the incident shall be advised, on a need-to-know basis, that an incident has occurred and what steps are being taken to address it.
- f) The DRE, with the assistance of the ERUUF Lead Minister and the ERUUF Caring Council, shall provide emotional and spiritual support, as well as provide guidance on available counseling services, to the affected minor, leaders, other minors and parents.
- g) All incidents shall be documented by the DRE. An incident report shall be developed for all serious accidents, health and abuse incidents.
- h) Any serious accidents, health and abuse incidents that are covered by an incident report shall be reported to the appropriate parties (e.g., the ERUUF Lead Minister, the ERUUF Executive Team, Board President, the insurance company and government authorities).
- i) The Lead Minister or appointed individuals shall investigate the cause of any serious accident, health or abuse incident and provide recommendations for resolving any outstanding issues associated with it. The results shall be documented and provided to all

receiving the incident report. The evaluation may be supplemented or preformed in entirety by government and insurance company representatives as defined by law and insurance policy instructions.

- j) The protection from false or mistaken allegations involving paid or volunteer staff or others in the ERUUF community is important. Until an allegation is confirmed, all reasonable confidentiality should be maintained. A grievance, if filed by a member or staff relative to an incidence shall be treated as an incidence under this policy.