

**MIDAMERICA REGION OF THE UUA CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY  
AND PROTECTION GUIDELINES**  
*(These guidelines are for any youth event in the MidAmerica Region)*  
*Updated December 2017*

**Preamble**

We, the MidAmerica Region of the UUA, as an institutional body of Unitarian Universalist congregations, recognize the importance of creating communities where everyone, including our very youngest to our oldest members, is safe. We recognize that religious communities, which should be dedicated to the creation of safe environments for all their members, are particularly vulnerable to incidents of abuse because of the high level of trust, the welcoming spirit, and the strong reliance and need for volunteers, especially in children and youth programming.

We recognize the importance in a religious community of those very factors of trust and the necessity to adopt guidelines to guard against incidents of abuse; exploitation; injury and/or being the victim of significant objectionable conduct. We further realize that institutions operating in the best manner possible with all due concern still cannot guarantee an absolutely risk-free environment.

We acknowledge that to adequately address the need for safe environments, it will mean change and sacrifice of some convenience, yet we know our responsibility to respond to the reality of our situation and to our children and youth. We affirm that healthy communication between adults, children, and youth must be nurtured in relationships that engender safety, protection and trust.

In this spirit, we endorse the following guidelines for district events, and strongly urge our member congregations to adopt them for local youth and child inclusive activities.

**Guidelines Statement**

These guidelines contain sections on:

- screening and selection of workers with children and youth
- supervision requirements
- procedures for reporting incidents, response to such incidents and removal of those who work with youth.

They shall apply to all MidAmerica Region events such as:

- youth conferences
- Area Youth Council meetings
- Youth cluster events and meetings
- Children and youth events at the MidAmerica Regional Meeting

All those working with children and youth are required to abide by the Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Children and Youth appended hereto.

## Definitions

CRC:	Conference Rules Committee
DRE:	Director of Religious Education
AYC:	Area Youth Council
MA:	MidAmerica Region of the UUA
Parent:	this term is also read to mean legal guardian when such is the case
RE:	Religious Education
Youth:	*a youth is classified as those in high school grades 9-12 or the equivalent for homeschooled youth

## Screening and Selection of those who work with Children and Youth

### Screening:

All staff and volunteers who provide direct care or supervision of children or youth at MA events must meet the following criteria:

- Advisors for youth must have been active in a MA congregation for at least six months, and must be at least 25 years old.
- Nursery Care workers must either be at least 18 years old, or if younger teens are employed, then there must be a supervising adult of at least 18 years of age present.
- All staff and volunteers working with youth and children will be asked to consent to a criminal background check.
- All staff and volunteers working with youth and children must complete an application form and supply two references. These references should be people who have known the applicants for at least three years, preferably in relation to previous work with children or youth. A government-issued photo identification, such as a driver's license, must be presented to the DRE and/or congregational staff person who oversees the RE program.
- All staff and volunteers working with children and youth will sign a Code of Conduct form.

### Supervision Requirements:

The MidAmerica Region of the UUA highly recommends that there always be at least two adults supervising children and youth.

For the purposes of these requirements a "group" is defined as those minors who have been assigned to a nursery, individual class, or specific program or activity within the context of that class, as well as youth who are taking part in a planned, organized component of their program.

Minimum adult-to-children/youth ratio is as follows:

Elementary through grade 8:	Ratio 1:5
Senior High (grades 9-12):	Ratio 1:10

For up to 10 elementary children there should be two adults supervising and for each one through five children above that an additional adult is required. With Senior High youth, there should be two adults for up to 20 youth and an additional adult for every ten youth above that number. In certain areas of the MidAmerica region, congregation's sponsoring a youth conference have adapted the ratio for High School youth to 1 adult for 6 youth. For respective events at those member congregations, their ratio is to be followed.

### **Discipline Guidelines:**

- Corporal discipline may not be used under any circumstances.
- A child or youth shall not be isolated in a classroom or conference situation unless it is being used as a means of redirecting said youth or child, or if it is necessary to isolate a youth from the rest of the conference community.
- Standard disciplinary behavior problems should be handled by teachers/advisors in the classroom or event.
- If a child or youth needs to be taken out of a classroom for serious behavior problems, the DRE or person in charge of Religious Education or the particular program should be notified and subsequently should take care of the situation.

In the event that an advisor, teacher, minister, DRE or RE volunteer is in a situation where they must be alone with a child or youth, the following guidelines apply:

- If you must be alone in a room with a youth or child, always leave a door open. Find a hallway, stairs, or open area to talk where there are other people around, but not within earshot of a confidential conversation.
- A Safe House shall be provided at conferences if it is necessary to separate a youth from his or her community. The adults at the Safe House must be properly screened adults. A Safe House can be a room in a congregation with an adult supervisor present at all times.

### **Adult Sponsorship:**

- At a Youth Conference, it is the responsibility of the youth and adult Registrars to be certain that every youth has an adult sponsor. Written permission forms will be provided to parents prior to the event and proper signatures must be filled in before any youth is admitted to any regional youth conference.

- Youth are not permitted to “show up” at a conference and be admitted. All youth and advisors need to follow the requirements as indicated on the conference registration forms.

### **Youth Requirement Exceptions:**

- There are certain circumstances when the two adult minimum can be compromised. Examples include:
- A youth member of an Area Youth Council may ride to a meeting with an adult from the Area Youth Council. In such case, written permission form must be obtained from the parents of the youth that includes necessary medical information, emergency numbers, etc. The adult driving also must be a screened adult. A youth may also ride with one adult advisor when they live nearby in order to attend an evening youth group meeting, or when an adult advisor is going to a conference with one youth. In both of these instances a parental form is required stating that the advisor has the parents permission for their youth to drive alone with an adult. The adult advisor must be screened.
- In the case where one youth advisor and/or RE teacher is to be alone in a classroom during a Sunday Church School due to a lack of volunteers, the door to the room should be left open and the DRE or responsible RE volunteer should frequent the room during the session for the safety of the youth/children and adult.
- There should never be fewer than two adults at youth group meetings.

### **Transportation To and From District Events:**

It is the responsibility of the local congregations and/or the parents to provide safe transportation to and from MidAmerica events. The region requires that all transportation be in accordance with the requirements listed below.

- All drivers must be at least 25 years of age and must provide proof of insurance and a valid driver’s license. When traveling to conferences from local congregations, the driver must be a screened youth group advisor. Written notes from parents are required for any exceptions that are made to this driving rule.
- Everyone in the car must be wearing properly functioning seat belts.
- If a driver to a MA event is not affiliated with a UU congregation, a permission form must be obtained from the parent of the youth giving permission for the youth to be driven to the event.
- No driver may be sleep-deprived, consume alcohol, or use any form of drug that can affect physical or mental performance during or before carrying out his/her duty as a driver. Drivers to and from events must be identified at the conference. Orientation sessions must include information on a room set aside for drivers to

- sleep. While we cannot dictate the amount of hours needed for drivers, each driver must take responsibility to get the amount of sleep needed to drive responsibly. Drivers are not allowed to stay up all night at any regional event.
- Individual congregations will have Parent Permission Forms filled out along in addition to the Registration Form for the regional event. This form must be kept with the accompanying youth advisor and should contain at least the following: parent's signature, parent emergency contact numbers, doctor's number, medical policy numbers, and details on any medication the youth is taking. The youth advisor shall provide the parent the following: a contact number where the youth can be reached, the telephone number of the congregation/event; the address; any other relevant details such as date, departure time/place, and names of drivers.

### **Conference Rules:**

Our MidAmerica youth conferences are organized and planned to be enriching experiences for our youth in order that they may have opportunities for developing leadership skills fellowship with other UU youth and youth leaders, and furthering their faith development. The following rules apply equally to youth and adults:

- Illegal use of alcoholic beverages, and illegal drugs or weapons are prohibited.\*
- Caffeine pills and other unnecessary drugs are not allowed.
- No sexual activity.\*
- Sexualized behavior will not be tolerated as it detracts from the conference community.
- Cars are off limits during the conference except for conference business necessitating travel.
- Smoking is not condoned during the conference for youth or adults.
- Attendees will remain on site at all times.
- Everyone must attend all mandatory planned activities.
- Co-ed sleeping areas will be monitored by teams of adults and youth; there will be one sleeping bag and/or blanket per attendee; there will be low-level lighting in the sleeping area. There will also be made available single-sex sleeping areas, with at least one adult assigned to each sleeping area.
- There will be no sleeping in any other areas of the building other than those designated.
- Being outside designated areas after curfew is prohibited.
- Adherence is required to all site rules including the hosting congregation's safety and liability policies.

In the event of a rules infraction, the Conference Rules Committee (CRC) will be convened to determine the consequences of the rule infraction. The CRC will follow guidelines that certain infractions (those rules that are designated with an \*) are not a

matter for discussion, but require immediate action of attendee being asked to go to a Safe House or make arrangements to leave the Conference. If there are issues which might require legal action, the hosting congregation will be fully informed.

Each congregation with youth attending the conference is required to meet the adult/youth ratio of at least 1 authorized adult to 10 youth, unless specified by the host congregation of a ratio authorized adult to 6 youth. Adult Sponsors must have the congregation's and parents' permission to transport youth.

### **Reporting of Incidents, and Removal of a Worker with Children and Youth Reporting:**

All persons affiliated with a MA event, including compensated workers, volunteers, ministers, chaplains, adults, or youth, who acquire knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that one or more children or youth at a MA event has been exploited, injured, sexually molested, or has been the victim of significant objectionable conduct, shall both immediately report the incident to the person in charge of the event and complete a "Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse" form and deliver it to the person in charge of the event. Where appropriate, they shall also report the incident to the relevant legal authority.

Every person in charge of an event to whom a report of injury, objectionable conduct, or molestation is made shall:

- Submit a copy of the "Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse" to MidAmerica Faith Development Program Manager, and to the Religious Educator and Minister of the hosting congregation.
- Submit a copy of the report to the parent of the apparent victim.
- Report the incident to the minister and DRE or person in charge of RE at the congregation with which the apparent victim is affiliated.
- If the apparent perpetrator is a youth, report the incident to the parent of the apparent perpetrator and to the Minister and DRE or person in charge of RE at the congregation with which the apparent perpetrator is affiliated.
- If the congregations named above do not have both a Minister and a Director of Religious Education, then the named reports shall be submitted to the president or chair of the congregation's board.

Adults who are neither a person in charge of an event nor a person affiliated with the event, and who nevertheless acquired knowledge, a reasonable knowledge, or a reasonable suspicion that one or more children or youth at a MA event has been exploited, injured, sexually molested, or been a victim of significant objectionable conduct, must consider whether they are required to report the incident to the law enforcement authorities of the jurisdiction in which the incident occurred, and if so,

report the incident. MidAmerica Region of the UUA encourages all responsible adults to consider themselves mandated reporters.

Adults are expected to identify and report suspicion of use or possession of illegal substances, harassment, abuse, and sexual or other misconduct, and will not engage in such behaviors themselves. In addition to their reporting obligations to the MidAmerica Region of the UUA, certain UUA employees are mandated reporters of suspected abuse or neglect of students as specified by applicable state law.

### **Response to Media Inquiries:**

Only the MA staff (or their specific designee) may speak for the MA in response to media inquiries concerning an alleged incident of abuse, injury, or objectionable conduct.

### **Removal of a Worker with Children or Youth:**

Should circumstances or events arise that indicate or cause reasonable suspicion that an adult worker is no longer a suitable person for working with children or youth, steps will be taken immediately to remove said adult from involvement or contact with children or youth. Any person with concerns about an adult MA staff person or volunteer shall contact the MA regional lead who will then assess the need for removal or other response. Such assessment will consist of consulting with the necessary parties, including (but not limited to) the Director of Religious Education and Minister of the worker's local congregation. If there is neither a Director of Religious Education nor Minister, the MA Staff will consult with the president or chair of the governing board. The MA regional lead will inform the MA Board and their appropriate supervisor of the Congregational Life Staff Group of the UUA of all such incidents and the actions taken.

In taking such action, the Regional Staff will afford the affected worker or volunteer an opportunity to know the charges against him or her, know the evidence supporting such charges, and the right to reply to or rebut such charges.

It is understood that such action will be handled with due caution and discretion, and that the MA Regional Staff have the full backing and support of the MA Board in following through on such action for removal.

Individual congregations are encouraged to develop their own guidelines in concert with these of the MA Region of the UUA.

## RESOURCES

for

**the MidAmerica Region of the  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations**

**Child and Youth Safety and Protection Guidelines**

**Contact information for reporting purposes:**

**Nancy Combs-Morgan  
Faith Development Program Manager  
MidAmerica Region of the UUA  
[ncombsmorgan@uua.org](mailto:ncombsmorgan@uua.org)  
(859)494-2424**

Or,

**Ian Evison Regional Lead  
MidAmerica Region of the UUA  
[ievison@uua.org](mailto:ievison@uua.org)  
(773)326-9787**

## Code of Conduct of Adults Working with Children and Youth

Adults who work with children and youth at MA events are expected to always have the best interests of children and youth at heart. Adults are expected to nurture the physical, emotional, and spiritual growth of children and youth by fostering an environment of kindness, trust, respectfulness, and fun. No one's enjoyment should ever be at the expense of another person's health or self-esteem. Our charge to children and youth workers is to encourage kindness and genuineness among the children and youth, and to discourage unkindness and falseness. In this manner, we hope to create an environment in which children and youth will be able to explore the spiritual and religious nature of their lives, both as individuals and communities. In light of this, there are some specific expectations that the region has of adults working with children and youth. They are as follows:

- **Sleep** – Those who work with children and youth at regional events are expected to get enough sleep so that they will be alert and able to maintain good judgment and clear thinking. We expect each worker to take individual responsibility for getting 'enough' or a 'reasonable amount' of sleep each night, so that they may perform their expected duties in a competent and professional manner.
- **“Friendship” with Children and Youth**—Although we hope that children/youth and adults will have genuine fondness for one another, any adult who looks to children/youth for “friendship” is not significantly mature to be in a position of authority or responsibility over them. A “friendship” is reciprocal, where neither person has more responsibility for the health of the relationship than the other. This is antithetical to the adult/child/youth relationship, where the adult is the one who assumes primary responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries and cultivating an atmosphere of health and trust. It is expected that relationships that an adult has with youth who have grown to adulthood will not become exploitative.
- **Unofficial Contact with Children/Youth**—Sometimes a genuine mentoring relationship will develop between a child/youth and adult. These can be not only healthy, but also transformative for both. However, it is our concern that a “predator” who does not have the best interest of the youth at heart will try to disguise an unhealthy relationship with a child/youth as a mentoring relationship. Therefore, if you wish to be in contact with a child/youth outside the normal channels of region-sponsored events, it is imperative that your behavior both be and appear to be above reproach. Any relationship you develop with a child/youth outside of district-sponsored events must be with the knowledge and consent of the parents or guardians. Furthermore, you should let the Faith Development Program Manager for the MA Region know about the nature and extent of the unofficial contact with the child/youth. In addition notify the child/youth's minister, or religious education leader, or congregational president. This is for the protection of the child/youth from potential predators, but also for your own protection. You will best protect

- yourself from false accusations of misconduct by keeping the region and the parent/guardians aware of your actions.
- **Sexualized Behavior**—It is never appropriate to engage in any manner of sexual behavior with a child or youth. This refers not only to explicitly sexual behavior, but also to sexually provocative and/or overly affectionate behavior or language. It is not appropriate to tell jokes with sexual content or to make “double entendres.” Physical expressions of affections such as hugs have their place, but it is best to allow the child or youth to initiate them, and the adult must be sensitive not to allow them to be prolonged or pressured. Also, in the time for children/youth to play games which involve direct physical contact, *adults must be sensitive to not insert themselves into these activities.*
  - **Confidentiality**—Adults who work with children and youth under the aegis of the MA Region are responsible not only to the children and youth, but to the Region as well. For the most part, a covenant of confidentiality will mean that you do not repeat information told to you in confidence. However, when information is of a major crisis nature (such as that the child/youth is a victim of abuse, is suicidal, has a serious problem with drugs, etc.) or that leads you to believe the child/youth will be a danger to him/herself or others, you must not keep such information to yourself for the safety of the child/youth, yourself and the MA Region. Encourage the child/youth to seek help from a parent or other authority figure, and inform them that it is your duty to report this information. In addition, you yourself must consult with a person of greater authority in the region about an appropriate course of action. If in doubt, it is best to initiate this conversation. For these reasons, never give children or youth the impression that you will keep secrets for them.

### Accordance with This Code of Conduct

Any MA worker with children or youth who disagrees with any provision of the code is free to discuss their opinions with the leadership of the MA Region. However, until such time as the region chooses to alter any portion of its provisions, the worker must abide by the code as written.

By signing below, the signatory indicates that they have read this Code of Conduct and agrees to abide by it. If a worker violates any of its provisions, they may be removed as a worker at MA regional events.

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Signature of Worker with Children or Youth

Date

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Printed Name of Worker

**REPORT OF SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD ABUSE**

1. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of child abuse:
2. Victim's Name and Contact Information:
3. Victim's age/date of birth:
4. Date/place of initial conversation with report from victim:
5. Victim's statement (give detailed summary here):
6. Name of person accused of abuse and contact information:  
  
If the alleged abuser is a youth, call to alleged abuser's parent/guardian,  
Date/time spoke with and summary:
7. Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other):
8. Name of DRE and/or Minister reported to, date/time and summary:

9. Call to victim's parent/guardian, date/time, spoke with and summary:

10. Call to local children and family service agency, date/time, spoke with and summary:

11. Call to local law enforcement agency, date/time, spoke with and summary:

12. Other contacts, name, date/time and summary:

Signature of Applicant /Report Preparer

Date

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This form should be sent to:

Nancy Combs-Morgan, Faith Development Program Manager,  
MidAmerica Region of the UUA  
[ncombsmorgan@uua.org](mailto:ncombsmorgan@uua.org)  
(859)494-2424

Or,

Ian Evison, Regional Lead  
MidAmerica Region of the UUA  
[ievison@uua.org](mailto:ievison@uua.org)  
(773)326-9787

## Additional Resources

### Unitarian Universalist Association Resources:

The Safety/Abuse Clearinghouse Resource Packet  
<http://www.uua.org/cde/education/safecong.html>

*The Safe Congregations Handbook: Nurturing Healthy Boundaries in our Faith Communities*, by Patricia Hoertdoerfer and Frederic Muir, editors, 2005, UUA.

*Creating Safe Congregations*, 1997, edited by Pat Hoertdoerfer and William Sinkford, UUA.

### Additional Resources:

*Safe and Secure: The Alban Guide to Protecting Your Congregation*, 1999, by Jeffrey W. Hanna, Alban Institute Publication #AL202. [www.alban.org](http://www.alban.org)

Church Mutual Insurance Co., 1-800-554-2642 <http://www.churchmutual.com>

*Risk Management Handbook*, by Christian Ministries Resources, Institute for Church Leadership  
<http://www.iclonline.com>

### Background Screening Services:

Volunteer Select, [www.volunteerselect.com](http://www.volunteerselect.com), (678)893-9600  
 Volunteer screening requires a \$25. one-time membership fee.  
 Social Security Screen, National Criminal File, Sexual Offender Search.

Screen Church Staff, [www.ScreenChurchStaff.com](http://www.ScreenChurchStaff.com)  
 Services: Variety of services to meet lay and professional needs of congregations.  
 Fees: Depends on the number of services done. Their recommended package for church volunteers is approximately \$65.

Screen Now (Recommended by Church Mutual), [www.choicepoint.com](http://www.choicepoint.com) 1-800-853-2414  
 Services: There are several options with a 15% discount for those organizations with Church Mutual insurance policies. A one-time membership fee of \$50 is required  
 Fees: The National Criminal file search is \$21.25; county criminal search is \$13.60; state criminal records search and motor vehicle reports are \$4.25.

## Mandatory Reporting by State in MidAmerica Region of the UUA

Source: <https://www.childwelfare.gov>

### The mandated reporters are listed below by state:

**Illinois** – Members of the clergy; school personnel, school directors and assistants; nursery care workers in childcare centers.

**Indiana** – Mandatory reporters include any staff member of a public or private institution, school, facility or agency.

**Iowa** – School employees; clergy NOT mandated to report

**Kansas** – Teachers, or any employees of an educational institution; licensed childcare providers, but NOT clergy.

**Kentucky** – Teachers, school personnel, childcare workers, but NOT clergy.

**Nebraska** – Any school employee, but NOT clergy.

**Michigan** – School administrators, counselors or teachers. Regulated childcare providers, and clergy.

**Minnesota** – Childcare providers and members of the clergy who received information while engaged in ministerial duties.

**Missouri** – Childcare workers; ministers and other persons serving in a similar capacity for any religious organization, and other persons with responsibility for the care of children.

**No. Dakota** – Religious practitioners of healing arts; school teachers, administrators and counselors, and childcare workers, but NOT clergy.

**Ohio** – Administrators or employees of day care centers, child day camps, or other public or private children service agency; teachers, school employees, or school authorities; persons, other than clerics, rendering spiritual treatment, through prayer, in accordance with the tenets of a well recognized religion.

**So. Dakota** – Teachers, school employees, or school authorities; licensed or registered child welfare providers. Clergy are NOT mandated reporters.

**Wisconsin** – School teachers and administrators; school employees; childcare workers; members of the clergy, or a religious order, including brothers, ministers, monks, nuns, priests, rabbis or sisters.