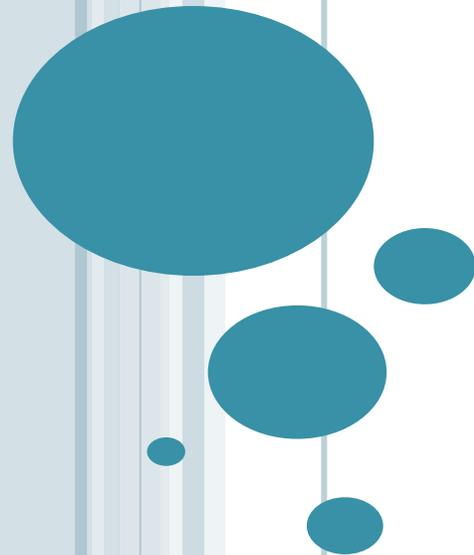




SAFETY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH
A self-guided training
for volunteer religious education stewards
First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, VT



INTRODUCTION

The Safe Congregation Policies of The First UU Society of Burlington stipulate that **all volunteers who will be working with children or youth be trained in key safety-related areas.**

Rather than require in-person attendance at a training, we have created this self-guided version, which you can explore at your convenience. **Take your time to read carefully and process the information**, reviewing as much as you wish.

It should take you about 15-20 minutes.

When you feel you understand these key areas, please **complete a short online quiz** (link to this is at the end), so we know you're well-informed!



TOPICS THIS TRAINING COVERS:

1. The positive roles adults can play with children and youth in religious community
2. Definitions of child abuse and other inappropriate conduct
3. First UU policies that govern working with children or youth
4. The rationale behind screening procedures
5. Reporting procedures for observed or suspected misconduct



BEFORE WE GET TOO FAR...

It is best for you to reference a copy of our **Safe Congregation Policies** while you do this training.

You can download it from our website below. The link is in the first sentence on that page.

<http://www.uusociety.org/SafeCongregationPolicies>



TOPIC 1 OF 5

1. The positive roles adults can play with children and youth in religious community



2. Definitions of child abuse and other inappropriate conduct
3. First UU policies that govern working with children or youth
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In our UU faith setting, adults have a crucial and privileged role when we work with children and youth. By virtue of being adults, we carry a certain power and influence.

We might find ourselves in roles such as:

- Youth advisor
- Chaperone
- Childcare provider
- Classroom teacher
- Classroom assistant
- Justice Sunday leader
- Vacation Sunday leader...





... or any other kind of role!

In these roles with children and youth, we can function as

- Mentors
- Role models
- Trusted friends



AND THAT'S A GOOD AND WONDROUS THING!





At any time, we may find ourselves...

- Teaching
- Counseling
- Ministering

... to the children or youth with whom we work.



This can be such a meaningful and joyful experience for us as well as providing a lifetime benefit to a young person.



THEREFORE...





We have the responsibility to exercise good judgment and mature wisdom in our relations with young people.

Very importantly, we must refrain from using our connections with young people to fulfill our own personal needs.





We must remember that young people are in a vulnerable position with regard to adults, and may not feel comfortable speaking out about inappropriate or otherwise confusing adult behavior.



More specifically...





Adult religious leaders who work with children and youth need to have a social network outside of their religious education responsibility in which to meet their own needs for friendship, affirmation and self-esteem.





They also must be willing and able to seek assistance from colleagues and religious professionals when they become aware of a situation that requires expert help or intervention.





It's about:

- Remembering and honoring the inherent power imbalance we have vis-à-vis younger people
- Affirming and clarifying roles and boundaries
- Safety (both ours and theirs!)
- Healthy and appropriate trust



(See Appendix 3 of the Safe Congregation Policies)



TOPIC 2 OF 5

1. The positive roles adults can play with children and youth in religious community

2. Definitions of child abuse and other inappropriate conduct



3. First UU policies that govern working with children or youth
4. The rationale behind screening procedures
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Our Safe Congregation Policies are aligned with policies and recommendations of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). It 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.”



In addition, **CHILD ABUSE IS AGAINST THE LAW.**





The UUA names four categories of child abuse:

1. Physical Abuse
2. Sexual Abuse
3. Emotional Abuse
4. Neglect



Appendix 4 of our Safe Congregation Policies details each of these. Here, we will define them in broader terms....





Physical Abuse

includes things like:

- Violent assault using hands, feet, or objects
- Burns, fractures, or bruises resulting from being beaten, shaken, or thrown

NOTE: Brief passive restraint is not considered abusive if its intent is to protect children and youth.





Sexual Abuse

includes:

- Any use of a child for sexual stimulation on the part of an adult or older child
- Touching forms such as sexual fondling; oral, genital, and/or anal penetration; intercourse; forcible rape
- Non-touching forms such as: comments intended to seduce; comments about sexual body parts; sexual references; pornography; obscene calls or texts; exhibitionism





Regarding sexual abuse, it is important to note that:

- Children are powerless either to consent or to resist sexual acts.
- Child sexual abuse is illegal whether or not the child “consents.”
- Offenders are always entirely responsible for the abuse. Period.
- Sexual abuse may or may not be violent.





Emotional Abuse

... can be difficult to identify. It involves verbal assault and emotional cruelty. It can include:

- Confinement
- Inadequate nurturance
- Extreme discipline
- Deliberately permitting self-destructive behaviors





Neglect

...includes physical examples such as:

- Not providing enough food, decent clothing, medicine, or proper living quarters.

... includes emotional and educational examples such as:

- Inadequate supervision, hazards in the home, refusing treatment for illnesses, inadequate nurturance, or permitting chronic truancy.



TOPIC 3 OF 5

1. The positive roles adults can play with children and youth in religious community
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4. The rationale behind screening procedures
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Here we will highlight **what you most need to know** in order to **do your part to keep our children and youth safe**. This is from sections I and II of the Safe Congregation Policies.

Some information will be new, and some protocols are not yet fully implemented.

Being a safe congregation requires some change!





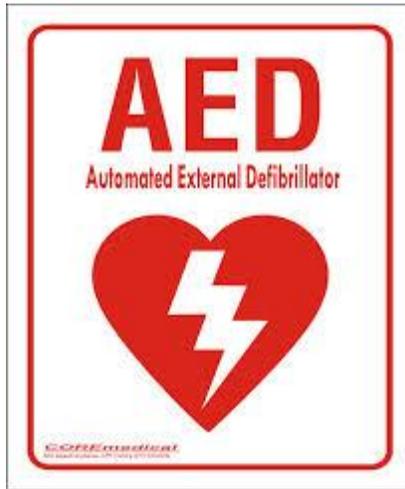
A number of safety features and protocols have been part of First UU for a long time, such as:

- Maintaining first aid kits and fire extinguishers around the building
- Conducting fire drills
- Providing special information about children provided by parents to teachers via a brightly colored sheet placed in classroom binders
- Food restriction signs by classroom doors
- Enforcing a “no nuts” policy



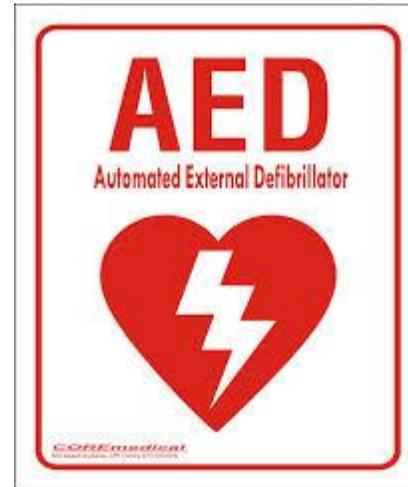


We have an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED). It is located on the first floor of the meetinghouse on the wall between the women's restroom and the small alcove.



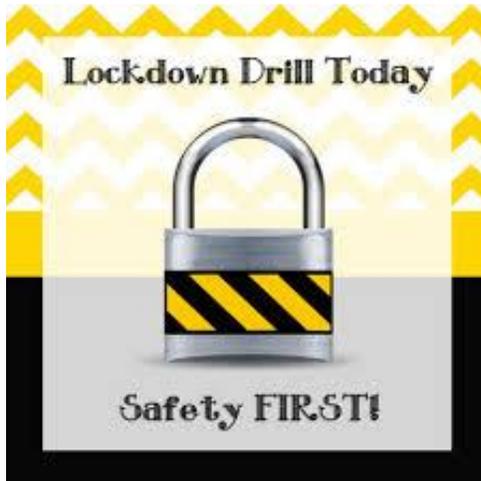


The DRE, childcare staff, and any paid youth staff must be trained in CPR and First Aid, and are therefore trained in its use.





We will soon be practicing lockdown drills.



These are for threatening situations where it is safer to hunker down than to evacuate. Classroom binders now include Lockdown Response Procedures.





There are **THREE** ways in which we all work to **PREVENT** abuse, harassment, and other inappropriate conduct towards children and youth:

1. Training & Education
2. Supervision
3. Screening





Training & Education is what you are doing right now!

Your learning is part of our prevention protocol.

Our UU faith community is a precious thing. Sharing in growing and learning requires some vulnerability on the part of all of us – both young and old. The policies we have developed exist to support EVERYONE's safety.





The safety of children and youth depends on adults understanding the complexities of sexuality and abuse and conducting themselves in safe ways when they work with young people.





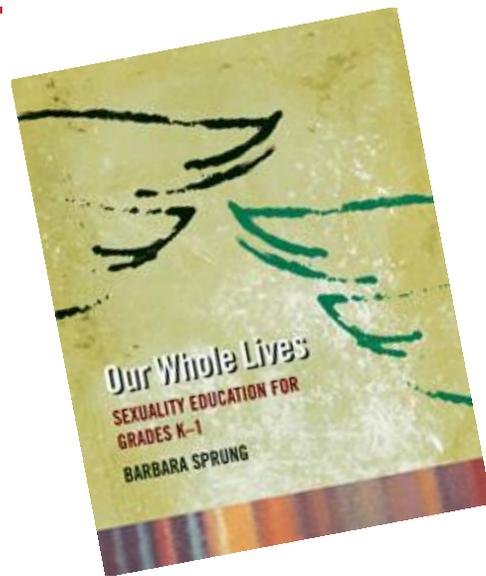
The safety of adults – from mistaken or false allegations of abuse – is dependent upon their understanding the reasoning behind policies and respecting and following safe protocols.





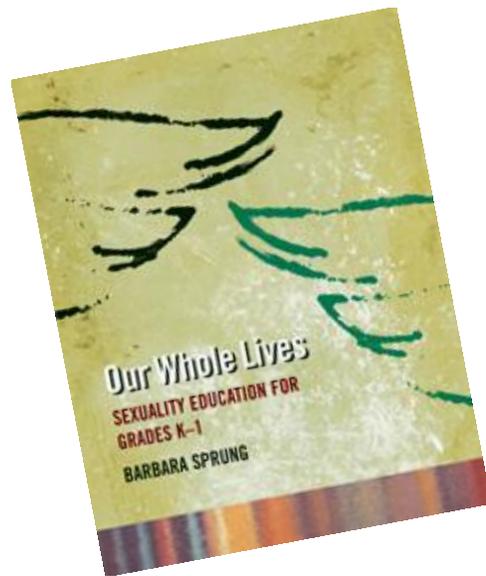
To better inform all ages about the prevention of sexual abuse, we will begin offering more levels of the Our Whole Lives (OWL) curriculum.

In addition to our regular Religious Education classes, OWL for K-1st grade and OWL for 4th-6th grade will be offered.





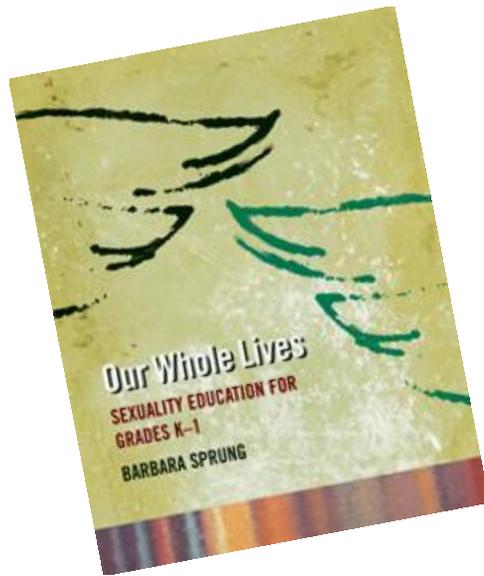
These curricula include high-quality, age-appropriate lessons on sexual abuse prevention. Each will be led by UU teachers who have attended a 15- hour training in its instruction.





NOTE:

This approach differs from the stated policy. We will be updating the policy to reflect this change.





We educate congregants about the Safe Congregations Policies by:

- Making it available in hard copy in multiple locations
- Having it online on our website
- Informing congregants consistently about where and how to locate it
- Giving new members a brochure that summarizes it





That sums up our Training & Education protocols!

Next up:

Supervision





Dismissal from RE programs...

Preschool – 3rd Grade must
be picked up by
parents/guardians.



4th Grade and up may be
dismissed independently.





Parents must inform us when they register about authorization regarding their child's pick-up. Most importantly, we need a photo of anyone not authorized for this.





For our Sunday morning nursery and for other childcare, staff sign children IN and OUT. Your role is to cooperate and support them with this.





For RE Programming, TWO Adults are required with each group of children. One change is that if only two are present, they must be unrelated to each other.





Why two unrelated adults?

Because it is natural to want to protect our relatives.

Therefore, working with children or youth alongside a relative can cloud our objectivity, leading to greater chance of failing to recognize a behavior or situation which may cause someone harm.





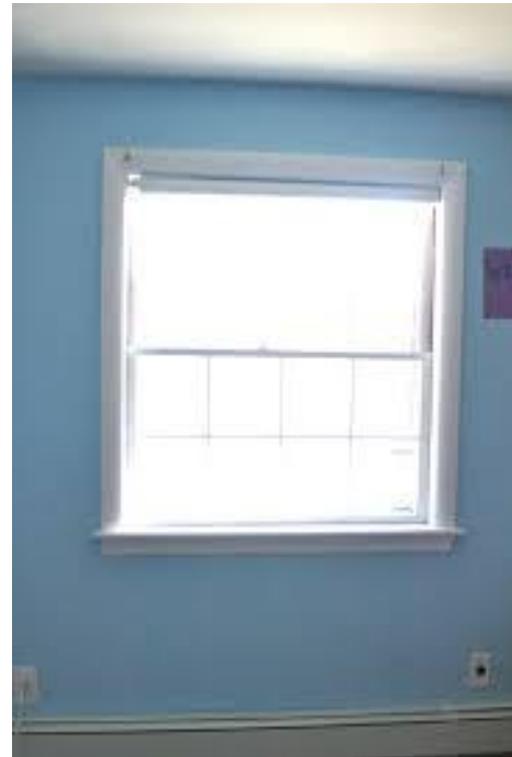
Further, if an adult guest who has not been screened per our protocols, visits the class, he/she cannot count as the second adult. Two other screened, unrelated adults must be present also.





As a rule, classroom doors have windows with shades. The **shade must be kept up** (unless we are in a lockdown situation) so that others can see in. This reduces the vulnerability – and increases the safety - of everyone in the room.

Windows, therefore, must be kept clear.





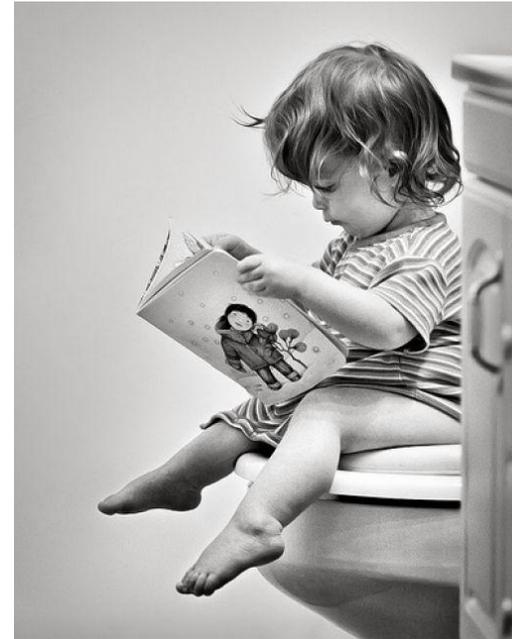
Supervision of children using the restroom

Supervision protocol relates to a child's age.

Infants and babies in diapers are changed in the nursery when under staff supervision.



Toddlers learning to use the toilet will do so with staff supervision, the doors propped open, and verbal coaching only, to the extent practicable. Parents of toddlers should make their best effort to have the child use the toilet prior to signing them into the nursery.

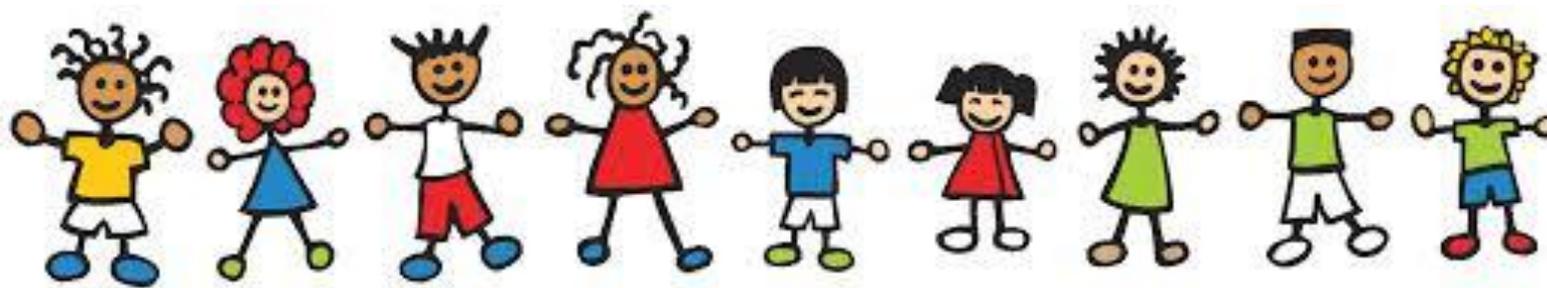




For older children...

Preschoolers, assumed to be potty-trained, will be accompanied by an adult. The bathroom and stall door will remain open. Any adult support will be verbal only.

Kindergarten – 2nd graders, when asking to go to the bathroom, should be watched to make sure that's where they go, and then return directly to class. 3rd grade and up are assumed to be independent unless we are informed otherwise.





Transportation guidelines include:

- Preference for two adults per vehicle when driving
- Ratios of 1:5 for preschool – 6th grade, 1:7 for 7th & up, and 1:4 for overnights
- Drivers aged 25 or older
- Requirement of permission slips; medical release, too, if trip is more than a day. Forms must be carried by leaders.
- Copies of valid driver's license and auto insurance submitted in advance of trip
- Seatbelts and safe driver checklists
- Required first aid kits for overnights and higher-risk trips





Yay for safe trips!





That sums up our Supervision protocols!

Next up:

Screening





Volunteer age requirements: Those working with youth in grades 7-12 must be 25 or older. Those working with children in grades 6 and under must be at least 18. In both cases, exceptions may be made at the DRE's discretion.





Code of Ethics: All volunteers with children and youth must agree to First UU's Code of Ethics. (Appendix 2 in our Safe Congregation Policies)

It concludes with an agreement “...not engage in sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children and youth; nor to sexually harass or engage in behavior with youth that constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.”



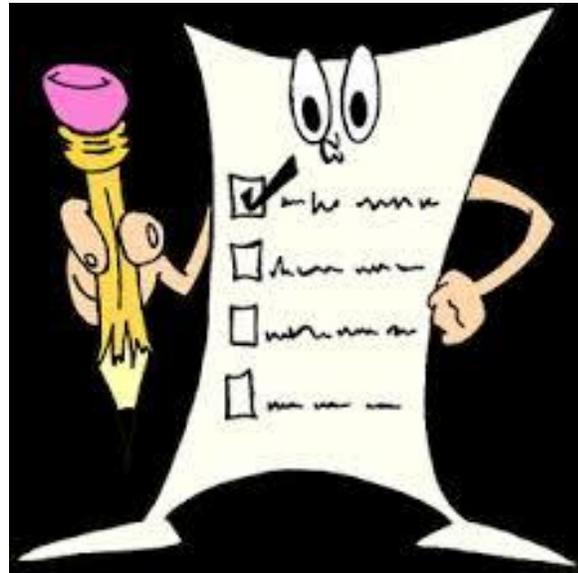


Volunteers with children and youth must also consent to a criminal background check. These will be run for new volunteers and thereafter every three years.

A photograph of a "REQUEST FOR CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK" form on a desk. The form has several sections for personal information, including name, address, and phone number. A blue pen is resting on the form. In the background, there is a blue mug and a calculator.



Such volunteers also must complete a Volunteer Screening and Application form when they begin volunteering. (Appendix 1 in the Safe Congregation Policies)





To volunteer with children or youth, someone must first have been active here – or at another UU congregation – for at least six months.





Anyone found to be convicted of, subject to pending charges for, or have self-disclosed any act of child abuse - will not be allowed to work with children or youth, or to participate in Society functions where they are present. Such a person will be subject to a Limited Access Agreement. (Appendix 7 in our Safe Congregation Policies)



TOPIC 4 OF 5

1. The positive roles adults can play with children and youth in religious community
2. Definitions of child abuse and other inappropriate conduct
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4. The rationale behind screening procedures



5. Reporting procedures for observed or suspected misconduct





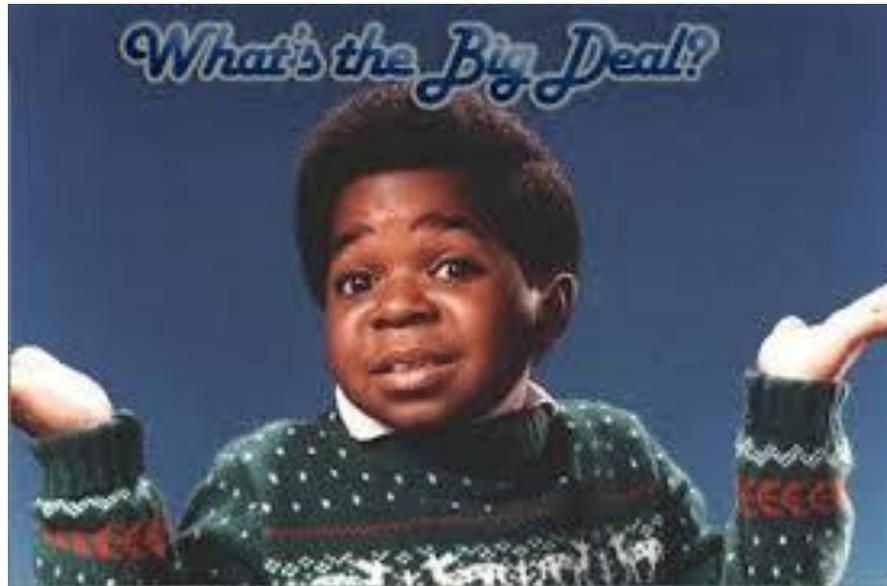
As you've just read, our screening involves:

- Ascertaining that persons are old enough for the role they seek
- Signing (thereby agreeing to) our Code of Ethics
- Consenting to a Criminal Background Check
- Completing a Volunteer Screening and Application form
- Being active at First UU (or UU elsewhere) for 6 months prior to volunteering





You may be saying to yourself: *Why all the fuss? Why so much production and paperwork? This is a church! We affirm the Seven Principles! What happened to simply trusting each other?!*





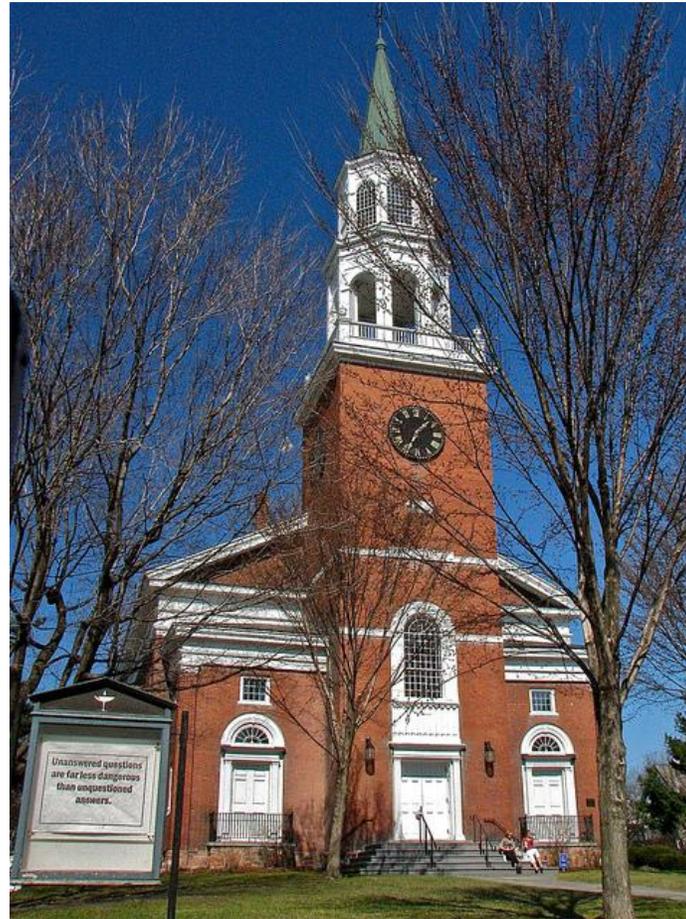
There are a few main reasons why our screening procedures matter.

First, being a large congregation, our systems are more complex. We need to be clear, consistent, and explicit about how we do things.





Second, we know that people with harmful or abusive intentions may seek out people and places which are most vulnerable. Churches, with their doors open on Sundays, can attract the interest of people with such intentions.





Third, a faith community is a place where we gather to explore our values, nourish our spirits, learn, and experience transformation.

This only happens when we allow ourselves to open up to the possibilities of change. In order to grow in faith, we must allow a certain vulnerability.





By screening people as we do, we are not under the false assumption that we are making First UU 100% safe for everyone. Instead, we are sharing the responsibility of the safety of our community. We are being explicit, clear and transparent about protocols which help to reduce everyone's vulnerability.





Congregations, schools and other such institutions have similar policies in place. We are in good company!





So when all of us – staff,
lay leaders,
volunteers, AND the
congregation as a
whole – take
screening seriously,
we say to each other
that safety is
important.

Safety is sacred.



TOPIC 5 OF 5

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Because a safe congregation is guided by its values of respecting everyone's inherent worth and dignity, our response to concerns, suspicions, or allegations is handled with rationality, compassion, and unity of purpose. We want to create an atmosphere of trust for both victims and offenders.





Our Safe Congregation Policies include detailed procedures for how to address an incident or possible problem or concern you may have.

These are found in section III.

It is important to reference this document should a concern arise. You should also contact someone on the Safety Team.





The Safety Team is comprised of the Minister, Director of Religious Education, and three at-large, Board-appointed members of the congregation.





Safety Team members agree to function with confidentiality (detailed in Appendix 5). The team is a source of support, advice, and counsel. Members can file reports with the Department of Children and Families (DCF). The team also serves to review the Safe Congregation Policies.





When receiving a report of suspected child or youth abuse, the team will handle it with discretion and professionalism. Appendix 6 spells out the balance of honoring confidentiality with respecting one's right to be informed and consulted.





The safety team will determine the level of concern raised by a report. There are four levels. The higher the level, the more details and individuals are involved in the responding steps taken. (See Appendix 8 for a matrix of the process for responding to different levels of reports.)





We all share in the responsibility of taking action if we observe or suspect that any kind of abuse or inappropriate conduct has occurred involving a child or youth.

Names and photos of the Safety Team members are posted on Society bulletin boards so you know who they are if you need to consult with one of them.





If you have a question about any of the information contained in this training, or anything in our Safe Congregation Policies, please contact a member of the Safety Team.



To remind you,
this training
covered the
following five
topics...



The positive role
adults can play
with children
and youth
in religious
community



Definitions of child abuse and other inappropriate conduct



First UU policies
that govern
working with
children or
youth



The rationale behind screening procedures



Reporting procedures for observed or suspected misconduct



That's the training!



Please follow the link below for the quiz. *Thank You!*

[Take Quiz Here](#)



