



UUFEC – Safe Congregation Handbook

Version 2.0

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for

Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of the Emerald Coast
1295 N Bayshore Drive,
Valparaiso, FL 32580

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I. PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Emerald Coast, recognize, with sadness, the reality that our children and young people are vulnerable to physical, sexual, neglect, and emotional abuse. As a community dedicated to preserving the inherent worth and dignity of every person, we covenant to affirm ways to prevent abuse and to immediately respond with professional integrity, as well as to engage in restorative practices with the intent to affirm justice, equity, and compassion in all our relations.

PREVENTION

In support of the principles of the Unitarian Universality Association, we believe:

- Every person is sacred and worthy of respect; therefore they should not be violated, physically, sexually, or emotionally.
- Accepting each other as we are means doing no harm and fostering well-being in ourselves as well as others
- As a community and a religious organization, we are responsible for creating a secure, safe, and non-violent environment.

Therefore, be it resolved, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Emerald Coast will do everything in its power to prevent abuse by creating a safe and nurturing environment with efficient and well-publicized procedures.

RESPONSE

We know that religious communities are not immune to the dangers of sexual abuse. We acknowledge that when abuse occurs, it is a tragedy, not only for the abused, but also for their families, our congregation, and our wider community as well. Therefore, be it resolved that if an abuse occurs, we will do everything in our power to respond in a speedy, professional, and caring manner that will preserve everyone's dignity.

RESTORATION

We also know that religious communities are often unaware of being host to adult sex offenders. Research shows that congregations that ignore this fact, and who create a culture of secrecy, increase the likelihood of abuse. Therefore, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Emerald Coast is dedicated to collaborating with governmental and private agencies to help reintegrate offenders who have proven records of rehabilitation. The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Emerald Coast reserves the right to determine the conditions for the offender's inclusion in community, as articulated in a Limited Access Agreement (attachment xxx). Under no circumstances will such an agreement compromise the congregation's commitment to prevent abuse. However, we are aware that if such a process is not created, then offenders are less likely to be open and truthful with other congregations, thereby perpetuating a culture of secrecy. Therefore, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Emerald Coast is committed to

create a restorative process based on truth and reconciliation. We expect offenders to speak truthfully about their past and to work toward reconciliation with all who were harmed by their previous offenses. In doing so, we engage in restorative ministry by sharing in the responsibility for create a safe, open, and healing community for everyone. In this spirit, we developed the following Child and Youth Protection Policies and Procedures that will influence all sponsored activities and events, thereby affirming the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Emerald Coast's will to be a "Safe Congregation."

II. COMMON CASES

This Safe Congregation Handbook is designed to help the leaders faced with the difficult task of helping the congregation decide if and how to include a sexual offender in their religious community by offering information and procedural suggestions. The facts and circumstances of the particular situation you are dealing with are of critical importance as you seek to make the best decisions for all involved. See the following common cases.

- A person who is a known sex offender is invited by one of the lay leaders of the congregation to join the faith community.
- During a pastoral care session, a man reveals to the minister that he feels like he is "on fire around children."
- A twelve-year-old (who attends religious education) from the congregation is babysitting for a four-year-old boy, who later that evening, tells his parents that the babysitter asked him to touch his penis.
- A person who used to be a member of the congregation writes the minister (who has never met him) to say that he is about to be released from jail for a sex offense and wants to return to the congregation.
- A convicted sex offender decides that the restricted access agreement he has been asked to sign is too restrictive at one congregation and begins to attend another one in the area.
- A newly settled minister of one month discovers that a person in the community was arrested for child molestation over fifteen years ago; when the previous minister departed, he never told anyone.
- A long standing member of the congregation is charged with uploading child pornography on an Internet bulletin board.

All of these situations involving sex offenses—and undoubtedly others—have happened at Unitarian Universalist congregations. In each case, the minister, the board of trustees, and key lay leaders didn't know what to do. One minister reports that "this was the most difficult decision I have faced in fifteen years in ministry." These situations can exacerbate people's most painful personal histories, and congregations often experience divisive conflicts over how to handle such situations.

III. DEFINITIONS

1. "Abuse" is an act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust that harms, or threatens to harm, a child or youth. There are four categories of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional or mental, and neglect. Harm caused by

withholding life's necessities – food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education – is called “neglect”.

2. A “child” or “minor” is a person under the age of 18 years. “Youth” means people 14-17 years old, inclusive.
3. A “Group” is defined as those children or youth under the age of 18 who have been assigned to a nursery, preschool, Religious Education (RE) class or are participating in any planned, organized program or activity.
4. “Mandatory Reporters” are persons who are under a legal duty to report abuse to designated civil authorities. Florida law makes no distinction between paid staff and non-paid volunteers. Accordingly, volunteers who come into contact with children in the course of their church duties are mandatory reporters. Mandatory reporters must report reasonably suspected cases of child abuse to Department of Children and Families (DCF). Whenever there is “reasonable cause” to believe that a child may have been abused. “Reasonable cause” does not require the reporter to investigate and feel there is certainty to the possible abuse. Instead, the system is designed so that people report suspicions and the professional child protective investigators do the investigation. Any person who has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse is permitted by law to make a report. The hotline for reporting abuse is abuse hotline, (800) 96-ABUSE. The identity of the reporter is *highly protected* by law, not even accessible by judges. The investigator will never disclose to the family who made the report.
5. “Sexual Misconduct” is the wrongful, improper or unlawful actions motivated by premeditated or intentional purposes or by obstinate indifference to the consequences of one's sexual acts.
6. The “Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team”, also known as the “Response Team”, is the authorized body responsible for all Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Emerald Coast formal responses to allegations / reports of abuse as outlined in this policy.
7. The “Safe Congregation Ministry Team” is the established body within the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Emerald Coast that is entrusted with the implementation of this policy.
8. A “supervisor” is an adult charged with maintaining the safety of his or her assigned group through the reasonable exercise of thoughtful action and responsibility. What constitutes appropriate supervision will vary with the ages of those in the group and the context of the activity.
9. “Workers” are persons. Including teens, who are engaged with a group of children or youth at Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Emerald Coast, whether they are paid or unpaid, permanently assigned or occasional.
10. The “DREs” refers to the Director of Religious Education.
11. A “Member” is an official member of the congregation as defined in the bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Emerald Coast.
12. A “Friend” is a registered participant and financial contributor of the church/fellowship as a non-member as defined in the bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Emerald Coast.
13. A “Religious Professional” is a trained staff member hired to perform religious functions, such as the Minister, Director(s) of Religious Education or the Music Director.

IV. PREVENTION

DUTIES OF THE SAFE CONGREGATION MINISTRY TEAM

The Safe Congregation Ministry Team shall:

1. Be comprised of the Minister, the DREs, and three other members of the congregation.
2. Review policies, procedure, and relevant legal changes annually, and make recommendations to the Board.
3. Educate the congregation about the safe congregation policies and procedures on an ongoing basis.

SCREENING AND SELECTION OF WORKERS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Any volunteer providing direct care or supervision for children or youth and the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Emerald Coast must meet the following criteria:

1. Active participant at UUFEC as a church member or a friend for at least six months prior to taking on any assigned group, committee, activity or event OR:
2. Active participant as a church member or friend in good standing at another UU congregation for at least one year. Exceptions can be made at the discretion of the DREs.
3. Over the age of 18, unless approved by the DREs.
4. Youth or children who teach and/or assist in RE must work with an adult.
5. Applicants with a documented history of abuse or admitted sexual misconduct are prohibited from providing direct care or supervision of children or youth under the age of 18.
6. All workers/volunteers must complete the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Emerald Coast Employment Application and consent to a background screening as UUFEC deems necessary.
7. All workers/volunteers must agree to be bound by the Code of Conduct set forth in this policy.
8. Parents are permitted and encouraged to visit their child's class at any time.

SUPERVISION PROCEDURES

All workers/volunteers are subject to the supervision and evaluation of the DREs and are required to comply with the following policies to ensure a safe and secure environment for our children and youth:

1. Each group should have at least two workers/volunteers present at all times, with at least one worker/volunteer being an adult. For infants and toddlers, the desired ratio is one worker/volunteer for each three children. The DREs or Minister is the final answer on the appropriate level of supervision for each group and activity and may exceptions to this rule on a case by case basis.

2. In order to provide visibility into classrooms, any window coverings will be open and/or the doors to any classrooms remain unlocked at all times.
3. The DREs shall circulate the RE classrooms and monitor classroom activities randomly during RE classes.
4. When taking children to the restroom, the worker/volunteer should stay out of the restroom until the child is finished. Workers/volunteers should only enter and assist when necessary.
5. All outings/field trips must be pre-approved by the DREs and all participating children must have a permission slip signed by a parent or guardian.
6. Pre-K and younger children must be picked up by a parent or guardian unless prior arrangements have been made with the DREs or teacher.
7. Corporal punishment or abusive language may not be used under any circumstances. This includes behavior that constitutes verbal, emotional, or physical abuse and behavior or language that is threatening or demeaning.

CONDUCT FOR ADULTS WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1. UUFEC seeks to create an environment in which children and youth can explore the spiritual and religious nature of their lives. We actively encourage relationships between young people and adults, and know that when healthy and genuine can be transformative for both the adult and child involved.
2. Workers and volunteers are expected to nurture the child/youth's physical, emotional and spiritual growth by treating him/her with kindness, trust, respect, and good humor. Interactions must be genuine and not manipulative of the child's needs or vulnerabilities. They must always have the best interests of the child as the foremost goal.
3. We expect all adults and youth working with children to understand the power differential in child/adult relationships. This differential places greater responsibility on the adult in the relationship. No matter the age of the child, it is always the responsibility of the adult to maintain appropriate boundaries in order to promote an atmosphere of health and trust. To that end, we ask all workers and volunteers to endorse the following Code of Ethics:

***Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth Who Are
Engaged In Leadership Roles with Children/Youth***

“Adults and older youth in leadership roles are in a position of responsibility and mentorship, and play a key role in the fostering the spiritual development of individuals and the community. It is therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions be well qualified to provide the special nurture, care, and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility. The relationship between young people and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if the positive potential of their relationship is to be realized. There are no more important areas of growth than those of self-worth and the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being. Adults play a key role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth. Wisdom dictates that children, youth, and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care; therefore,

leaders will refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive, or erotic behavior with children and youth. Neither shall they sexually harass or engage in behavior with children and youth which constitute verbal, emotional, or physical abuse. Leaders shall be informed of this code of ethics and agree to it before assuming their role. In cases of violating this code, appropriate action will be taken.” *Adopted by the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1986.*

4. Other areas that may be of concern:
 - a. *Physical Affection*: Physical expressions of affection, such as hugs, are acceptable, but it is best to allow the child to initiate the contact or to at least ask permission of the child, and the adult must be sensitive not to allow such affection to become too frequent or prolonged.
 - b. *Tobacco, Drugs, and Alcohol*: The use of tobacco, alcohol, or drugs by minors is prohibited. Workers and volunteers should at all times be aware that their own behavior is a powerful statement to children as to what is acceptable and responsible use of these agents. Adults, while acting in a supervisory capacity, should not use alcohol or drugs and should use tobacco, if at all, moderately and discreetly.
 - c. *Confidentiality vs. Secrets*: If a child discloses incidents of abuse or neglect, the worker/volunteer should listen carefully to the report, but ask limited, non-leading questions, only to determine what action to take. The worker/volunteer should document any and all conversations as soon as possible. Should the disclosure raise a suspicion that abuse has occurred or that the child is in imminent danger, the worker should report immediately to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Response Team. While you can assure a child that you will respect the information and use it confidentially, never give the child the impression that you will keep secrets. Secrets can be issues that put a person in danger.
 - d. *Disclosures*: Children’s statements will be taken seriously. In the event that a child makes a disclosure, or is in an emergency situation, an approved adult will stay with the child until Children, Youth, and Family services and/or the Response Team has been contacted.

EDUCATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

All church leaders share in the responsibility for educating the congregation about the *Safe Congregation Handbook*. All church members and friends share in the responsibilities of all of the procedures within the handbook. In summary, they are as follow:

1. A copy of the *Safe Congregation Handbook* will be provided to anyone identified by the DREs as being within the definition of “worker” or “volunteer”. All new and existing workers and volunteers will be required to sign a form indicating that they have read the *Safe Congregation Handbook* and agree to be bound by it.

2. The *Safe Congregation Handbook* will be distributed to the parents of all children currently participating in the RE program, and thereafter a copy shall be provided to the parents of children enrolling for the first time.
3. References to the *Safe Congregation Handbook* will be a standard part of every application interview and training of new workers/volunteers.
4. Teacher training on the *Safe Congregation Handbook* and on child abuse awareness and prevention will be conducted annually.
5. At least once each year, the DREs or a designee will compare a current list of approved workers/volunteers with sexual abuse registry lists generated by municipal, county, and/or state units of government.
6. The DREs shall store all application forms, signed consents, and background check reports in a locked file.
7. The Safe Congregation Ministry Team will report annually to the Board regarding the implementation and compliance of this policy.
8. The Safe Congregation Ministry Team shall publish and make available a brochure summarizing this policy.
9. Anyone with access to volunteer disclosures, background check reports, and application forms must agree to hold that information in confidentiality except to share relevant information with the Response Team members.

V. RESPONSE

THE SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND ABUSE RESPONSE TEAM (RESPONSE TEAM) SHALL:

1. Consist of the Minister, the Director of Religious Education, and one appointee of the Board, and at least one alternate.
2. Be members of the Safe Congregation Ministry Team.
3. Screen all applications for paid staff positions and all RE teachers and volunteers. Screening may be performed by a Response Team member or a designee, with the results reported to the Response Team in confidence.
4. Investigate incidents of abuse involving church members at all church sponsored functions as well as incidents involving members that did not occur on church grounds. Report allegations as required by Florida law. Decide if it is appropriate, and to what extent, to permit access to the church by an alleged, admitted, or convicted abuser. Negotiate a Limited Access Agreement (attachment xxx) with that person and propose it to the Board for approval.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

The State of Florida has very specific laws on mandatory reporters. Although every person has a responsibility to report suspected abuse or neglect, some occupations are specified in Florida law as required to do so. These occupations are considered “professionally mandatory reporters”. A professionally mandatory reporter of child abuse/neglect is required by Florida Statute to provide his or her name to the Abuse

Hotline Counselor when reporting. A professionally mandatory reporter's name is entered into the record of the report, but is held confidential. To report abuse:

- Contact the Florida Abuse Hotline by one of the following means:
 - Telephone 1-800-96-ABUSE
 - Fax 1-800-914-0004
 - TDD 1-800-453-5145
 - Web <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us>
- Give specific descriptions of the incident(s) or the circumstances contributing to the risk of harm. This includes **who** was involved, **what** occurred, **when** and **where** it occurred, **why** it happened, the extent of any injuries sustained, and what the victim(s) said happened, and any other pertinent information.
- Provide the following information
 - The reporters name (only for Mandatory reporters, to be held confidential in the report)
 - Name, date of birth (or approximate age), race, and gender, for all adults and children involved
 - Addresses for all subjects, including current location
 - Relationship of the alleged perpetrator to the child
 - Other relevant information that would expedite an investigation, such as directions to the victim and potential risks to the investigator

Do not delay in contacting the Abuse Hotline even if you do not have all the necessary information. The Abuse Hotline Counselor will make an assessment based on the available information, and will decide if it is sufficient to accept a report.

There are times when all Abuse Hotline Counselors are either taking calls or entering reports. Be patient, and do not hang up. The call will be answered by the next available counselor. Counselors are trained to handle each call as quickly as possible, while ensuring that each caller is afforded quality service. However, if the situation is an emergency or the victim is in imminent danger, the caller should hang up, dial 911, and then follow-up with a call to the Abuse Hotline.

The full list of Mandatory Reporters is included in the "REPORTING ABUSE OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS" in appendix xxxx. Two reporters of note are:

- Childcare workers are mandatory reporters
- Clergy have clergy-penitent privileges and have privileged communications, therefore are not mandatory reporters in that situation

The Response Team, in addition to notifying Abuse Hotline, will notify the following, as applicable:

1. Parent or guardian
2. President of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Emerald Coast
3. Insurance Company
4. Media Spokesperson designated by the Board

The Response Team should document all notifications, including telephone calls to the hotline, and retain this documentation in the Church records along with written reports. An approved adult should stay with a child in any emergency situation that involves disclosure of abuse. Pastoral care and counseling referrals should be provided as desired.

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS OR ALLEGATION OF ABUSE OR MISCONDUCT BY AN ADULT

1. **Meet directly with those involved.** Once a situation arises, as quickly as possible, the Minister (with a Response Team member) should meet privately with:
 - The alleged or convicted abuser, and possibly his or her partner or family, to discuss the concerns that have been raised
 - The alleged victim's parents or guardians if the child or youth is also in the congregation, to discuss what is known and what steps will be taken
 - a. **In the case of a known sex offender:** If an adult has been successfully prosecuted for a sexual offense and is entering or returning to the congregation, before meeting with that individual, the Minister and members of the Response Team should:
 - i. Check the local sex offender registry for further information(<http://xxxxxxx>)
 - ii. Speak with the probation or parole officer with written permission from the individual
 - iii. Obtain authorization to conduct a criminal or sexual abuse background check
 - b. **In the case of alleged abuse:** If there is an allegation of sexual abuse naming an adult in the congregation, before meeting with that individual, the Minister or member of the Response Team should:
 - i. Find out the details of the allegation
 - ii. Find out what actions have been taken. For example, the Response Team member may want to inquire if the allegation has been reported to the appropriate authorities, if there is a current investigation, and if there are other allegations against this individual
 - iii. Obtain authorization to conduct a criminal or sexual background check
 - c. **In the case of an adult seeking help:** If an adult talks about his/her attraction to children, but has not acted on that attraction, before meeting with that individual, the Response Team member in consultation with the Response Team will have:
 - i. Educated him/herself about the effectiveness of treatment
 - ii. Found referrals to a professional who has the expertise to work with someone at risk of sexually abusing a child

- d. **In the case of a known youth/child who may have abused:** If there is an allegation of sexual abuse naming a teen or child in the congregation, the process will be very different than the process for dealing with an adult. Before meeting with that child or teen, the Minister and members of the Response Team should review the process for taking steps when youth have abused. (See “Guidelines for Dealing with Cases in which the Abuser is a Youth or Child”)
 - e. **In the case of an allegation of a religious professional as an abuser:** If there is an allegation of sexual abuse naming a religious professional of the congregation:
 - i. These steps do not apply
 - ii. The President of the Board should be contacted immediately
 - iii. The President should contact the Director for Congregational Services at the UUA and/or District Executive serving the congregation
2. **Convene the Response Team.** After meeting with the individual, if the Minister determines that there is a genuine cause for concern, the person should then be asked to meet with the Minister and the Sexual Misconduct and the Abuse Response Team. The adult in question should be told that the purpose of the meeting with the Team is to:
- i. Ensure the safety of everyone involved
 - ii. Determine if it is possible to be involved in congregational activities
 - iii. Set the next steps into place

All meetings and conversations should be briefly documented and accounted for in a record by the Minister or the Team. Be sure to keep the documentation in a secure location and not accessible to anyone who enters the office.

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS OR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE OR MISCONDUCT BY A YOUTH OR CHILD

One of the most difficult possible situations is when a teenager or child in the congregation has been accused of abusing or mistreating a child, either sexually or non-sexually, in the congregation. The difficulty is that in some cases these children may simply be acting on their feelings impulsively, not quite understanding the importance of boundaries, whereas in other cases, you and children who abuse, bully or engage in sexual activity with other children (or even adults) may become future adult offenders. In any of these cases, pastoral care and support for the families involved is crucial. This will be very difficult for the parents involved, and they will need the support of their church community, especially the minister and the DREs. Helping them to feel welcome and supported is essential, as is the ongoing offer of ministry.

1. After an incident comes to the attention of the Minister or other staff member, the Minister should initiate contact individually with the parents of both children

to discuss the allegation and next steps. The Minister should then decide if the incident warrants the involvement of the Response Team.

2. The Minister should encourage the parents of the child who was mistreated to seek an evaluation for this child. Contact the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA) or the Safer Society Foundation for referrals if you don't have a local list of therapists with expertise in this area.
3. The parents of the child who initiated the mistreatment or abuse need to be engaged more thoroughly in discussion about next steps. It may be necessary to call Child Protective Services. Regardless, before the initiator is allowed to continue to attend religious education, this child should receive an extensive assessment by a child psychologist or psychiatrist having experience with childhood sexual or non-sexual behavior problems. The parents should also agree to closely monitor their child whenever he or she is at the church. It is NOT the responsibility of the Minister or the Response Team to decide if abuse has occurred, but rather to assure that such assessment does take place. It may be necessary for the church to pay for such an assessment if the parent or caregiver cannot afford it.
4. If the evaluation finds that this was simply a case of inappropriate boundaries or impulsive behavior, and with the recommendation of the therapist that the child can safely attend church functions with other children, the Minister and the parents can meet with the child to discuss the importance of never repeating the behavior, the harm it can do to other children, and the consequences should such a situation occur again.
5. If the treatment provider reports that the child has a more severe behavior problem that is likely to be repetitive, the Response Team and the parents need to meet to decide how and if the child can safely be involved with the Religious Education or Youth Group program. A modified Limited Access Agreement should be developed and signed by both the child and the parents. In some cases, it may be necessary to deny the young person continued involvement with other children until treatment is completed and to consider alternate ways to provide religious education.
6. In some situations, a family will want to bring a child who has been treated for abuse related to offenses back into the congregation after treatment is completed. In such cases, the steps for involving an adult offender can be followed, including the Limited Access Agreement signed by both the youth and their parents.

VI. RESTORATION

ASSESSMENT AND CONDITIONS FOR INCLUSION OF AN OFFENDER

1. **Bring in Professional Expertise.** If the adult **has completed** a prison sentence and/or a treatment program, the Response Team should ask that person to sign a release form, allowing the Team to contact the sex offender treatment provider, probation officer, and/or current therapist. If the adult **has not completed** a treatment program or if the adult has come forward for help, the Response Team

should ask the person to go for a professional assessment with a therapist who specializes in working with sex offenders.

2. **Respond to a Lack of Cooperation.** If the adult offender refuses permission to contact the therapist or refuses to go for an assessment, the Minister would be right to refuse that person participation in any congregational activity. However, if the offender cannot afford a one-time assessment, the congregation may choose to provide partial or total funding.
3. **Ensure Safety First.** If the treatment provider indicates that the person has:
 - a. Successfully completed or is participating successfully in treatment and is **not** a high risk to abuse again OR
 - b. The initial assessment of the adult at risk to abuse indicates he or she is low risk to repeat any abuse
 - c. Then the Response Team may choose to move forward with inclusion and develop a Limited Access Agreement. If the professional assessment indicates that the person is at high risk of re-offending, it is appropriate to deny that person involvement in the faith community until treatment is successful at reducing the risk.
4. **Determine Conditions for Inclusion.** If the Response Team decides to include the offender, they should meet with that adult and his/her spouse, family or support people to review the conditions of his/her participation in the community. For example, someone with a history of sexually abusing children should not be allowed any access to children or youth activities and should always be accompanied by a “support person” when children or teenagers are present at intergenerational activities, including worship. These conditions will be listed in their Limited Access Agreement and Check List Form. All persons with past histories of sexual offenses should then be asked to sign a Limited Access Agreement or Check List. Upon entry into the congregation and depending on the circumstances, the person may be asked to review this agreement quarterly or at least annually with the Team and sign a new one each year.
5. **Deny Access if the Adult Refuses to Sign the Limited Access Agreement.** If the offender refuses to sign the Limited Access Agreement, it is then appropriate to deny the person access to congregation functions and church property.
 - a. An offender who refuses to sign a Limited Access Agreement should know that if they enter the congregation or its property, a member of the Response Team or the Board will ask the offender to leave.
 - b. If the offender further refuses, a Team member should call the local police for assistance.
6. **Decide Who Needs to Know.** Once the adult signs the Limited Access Agreement, the decision needs to be made about who in the congregation needs to know a congregant has a history of sex offending behaviors. Clearly, key people, including the Minister, the DREs, the President of the Board, and the Response Team need to know that the person:
 - a. Is attending church
 - b. Has agreed not to have contact with children or youth
 - c. Has signed a Limited Access Agreement or check list
 - d. Should never be alone with children or youth

7. **Become Part of the Adult's Circle of Support and Accountability.** The Response Team should decide how often to meet (e.g., at least once per quarter) with any individual with whom it has a Limited Access Agreement to review the arrangement and address any concerns. If the Minister or the DREs changes, and when the President of the Board changes, it is important that the departing person inform the new person of any existing agreements to ensure provision of pastoral support for the offender as well as continuity of awareness of the situation.
 - a. In sharing information appropriately, it is also important to remain aware of confidentiality and privacy for all involved. *Copies of files, including Limited Access Agreement information, should be treated with care and kept in a secure file drawer.* If and when legal questions arise, the Minister and/or Board President should contact a lawyer who can provide information and advice and who knows about applicable local and state statutes.
8. **Move Toward Healing in the Congregation.** Aware that at any step, emotions will surface for many people, the congregation is dedicated to create a culture of deep caring so as to help everyone to experience authentic healing. It does so by:
 - a. Creating caring-ministry teams for victims of sexual abuse to find the pastoral support and referral system they need to process their experiences
 - b. Strengthening the education programs throughout the congregation and informing members and friends of the Safe Congregation policies and procedures
 - c. Regularly reviewing the policies and procedures and updating them as necessary

CONTACTS

Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers.

<http://www.atsa.com/>

4900 S.W. Griffith Drive, Suite 274

Beaverton, Oregon 97005, USA

Phone: (503) 643-1023

Fax: (503) 643-5084

E-mail: atsa@atsa.com

Safer Society Foundation.

<http://www.saferociety.org/>

P.O. Box 340

Brandon, VT 05733-0340 USA

Phone: (802) 247-3132

Fax: (802) 247-4233

APPENDICES

Limited Access Agreement – Standard Format

Limited Access Agreement – Check List Format

Driver Qualification for Transporting Minors

Background Investigation Authorization Form

**Field Trip Permission Form and Consent for Emergency Medical
Treatment**

Overnight Medical Information Form