

## **UUSG CHILD ABUSE POLICY**

Child abuse – whether sexual, physical, or emotional – is a problem faced by every community of faith. Ours is no exception. As a member congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Association, we have covenanted to affirm and promote the equal worth and dignity of every person; justice, equality and compassion in human relations; and acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregation. By virtue of this covenant and the deep moral commitments that underlie it, we are obligated to take reasonable steps to protect our community’s most vulnerable members – particularly children and youth – from abuse within our church, and to care for those who have been victimized by abuse. Therefore, we strive to do the following:

- Provide age appropriate information about development, sexuality, and prevention of abuse;
- Train and support members of our community, particularly our religious education teachers, youth leaders, and parents, in the areas of parenting skills, growth and development, sexuality-related issues, and prevention of child abuse;
- Establish policies and procedures for safeguarding children from abuse;
- Fully and promptly investigate any reported incident of abuse within our community;
- Cooperate with law enforcement and child protection authorities, and support compliance with all applicable child abuse reporting requirements;
- Support and offer healing for victims of abuse.

While our obligation to safeguard vulnerable members of our community is paramount, our Unitarian Universalist principles include respect for the worth and dignity of *every* person – even those who have committed or are accused of committing abuse. Therefore, to the extent possible while maintaining safety and honoring the needs of those victimized by abuse, we will also strive to offer support and healing to those who have engaged in past abuse but have committed not to repeat their crimes; who are struggling to overcome a predisposition to abuse; or who have been accused of abuse but maintain their innocence.

### **Implementation by the Caring Team**

The Caring Team will be responsible for overseeing implementation of the policy and goals described above. In particular, the Caring Team will be responsible for advising the Board of Directors, committees, and other lay leaders on formation and implementation of practices and procedures consistent with the above goals; cooperating with the LRE Committee, Communications Committee, and appropriate others, to provide information, education, and training consistent with the goals set forth in this policy; and investigating and responding to incidents of abuse. If an allegation of child abuse is made against any professional clergy member or other member of the Caring Team, that individual will not participate as a member of the Team in any investigation of the matter.

## **Reporting Child Abuse**

Child abuse can be stopped only if it is reported to someone in a position to do something about it. Anyone may report suspected child abuse to the professional clergy or a member of the Caring Team. Any UUSG employee, officer, Board or Committee member, religious education teacher, youth advisor, and any other volunteer with responsibility for supervising children or youth, who has reason to believe that any child or youth involved in any UUSG-sponsored program or activity has been abused, **MUST** immediately report the suspected abuse to the professional clergy or another member of the Caring Team.

The names and telephone numbers of the members of the Caring Team will be posted on the "People You Should Know" bulletin board in the Common Room, or in a similar prominent location.

Anyone who is required to report child abuse to appropriate authorities under applicable law (i.e., who is a "mandated reporter") must also comply with their legal reporting obligations.

UUSG prohibits retaliation against any person for making a good-faith report of abuse or participating in good faith in an investigation of alleged abuse. Any person who believes he or she has been subjected to retaliation in violation of this policy should immediately report the retaliation to a member of the Caring Team or the Board of Directors.

**Approved by the UUSG Board of Directors on February 12, 2008.**