



SECOND UNITARIAN CHURCH OF OMAHA
**SAFE CONGREGATION
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>OUR PHILOSOPHY</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>OUR SAFE CONGREGATION POLICY</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>SMART: WHO IS ON IT?</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>SMART: WHAT DOES IT DO?</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>SCREENING PROCEDURE</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>EDUCATION AND AWARENESS</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>DOCUMENTATION OF AN INCIDENT OF SUSPECTED ABUSE</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>DECISION MAKING FLOWCHART FOR AN INCIDENT</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>INCIDENT PROCEDURE</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>REASONS FOR EXCLUDING AN OFFENDER FROM ALL CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>16</u>
• <u>ONLINE SAFETY PRACTICES FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>RECOMMENDED VIRTUAL SAFETY PRACTICES FOR ADULT LEADERS OF YOUTH PROGRAMMING</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR ADULT VOLUNTEERS</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>RESOURCE AGENCIES:</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>REQUIRED MATERIAL FOR OFFENDER RISK ASSESSMENT</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATIONS WITH THERAPISTS AND/OR PROBATION/PAROLE OFFICERS:</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>SMART CASE SUMMARY FORM</u>	<u>25</u>
<u>FORM TO ASSIST IN REPORTING AN INCIDENT OF SUSPECTED ABUSE</u>	<u>27</u>
<u>CODE OF ETHICS (COVENANT? HOW TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN DIFFERENT COVENANTS?) FOR ADULT LEADERS</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>ADULT VOLUNTEER OR PAID STAFF INFORMATION FORM</u>	<u>29</u>
<u>YOUTH PAID/VOLUNTEER INFORMATION FORM</u>	<u>32</u>
<u>BEHAVIOR COVENANT SAMPLE</u>	<u>34</u>
<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u>	<u>36</u>

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Our commitment, as Unitarian Universalists, to the inherent worth and dignity of every person and to justice and compassion, compel us to create a safe and nurturing environment that protects children and adults from harm and promotes their spiritual growth while part of our community. We pledge to conduct ourselves in a manner which conveys mutual respect and consideration.

Our philosophy for a safe congregation is grounded in our Unitarian Universalist Principles¹:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person.
Every person's sexuality is sacred and is worthy of respect, and therefore, is not to be violated.
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relationships.
We treat others as we would want to be treated; therefore, sexual exploitation and interpersonal violence is wrong.
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregation.
Accepting each other, as we are, means doing no harm and fostering well-being in one's self and others.
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
In our relationship to others, our freedom of sexuality is as important as the responsibility for it.
- The right to conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregation and in society at large.
As a community and as an institution, we are responsible for creating a secure and safe environment.
- The goal of a world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.
We have the opportunity to create the kind of environment that lends itself to peace, liberty and justice in human sexuality, and we can become a model for the rest of society.
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.
When we respect each person's sexual integrity we honor the wholeness of life and we respect the web of all existence.

This Safe Congregation Policy is intended to help create a safe environment for all in a manner that promotes our Unitarian Universalist (UU) principles within the context of our relationships to one another and as a religious community. This Policy should be considered a “living document” that may be amended to reflect changing needs. Requests for amendments should be made through the Board of Trustees. Situations regarding disruptive persons, threats or personal violence are covered by the Disruptive Participant Policy.

¹ From Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sexual Ethics as it appears in every age level of Sexuality and Our Faith, the companion volume to Our Whole Lives.

OUR SAFE CONGREGATION POLICY

- 1. Second Unitarian Church will not tolerate abusive or sexualized behavior that is used to harass, manipulate, control or influence another individual.** Any act of this kind, or any other form of abuse; occurring at a church related function or on church property will be reported to the DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION and the Minister immediately. The Minister, the DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, and the person who first learns of the incident will report all such incidents as required by the laws of the State of Nebraska immediately and without exception. When such an incident is reported, Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team (SMART) is activated and the degree of participation in church-related activities by the alleged perpetrator(s) will be determined on a case-by-case.
- 2. Anyone convicted in a court of competent jurisdiction of sexual or physical abuse of a child or an adult shall not be permitted to volunteer with children or youth at the Church.** All volunteers will be screened before admittance as a volunteer. They will be informed of the anti-abuse policies and procedures of Second Unitarian Church, as well as the applicable reporting laws of the State of Nebraska. (See the “Screening Procedure”). Misrepresentation or omissions of any past convictions on a screening form will be considered immediate grounds for removal from church membership.
- 3. All volunteers working with children and youth are required to be a member at Second Unitarian Church or to be an affiliate for at least four months.** Parents are welcomed at any time to remain with their children during their participation at Second Unitarian events.
- 4. Two adults will be present with a group of children or youth at all times to ensure their safety.** Where it is not practical to have two approved adults present, the door must be left open. If one of the two adults is a guest speaker or pastor, the other adult is required to be an approved volunteer or staff member, present at all times.
- 5. Parents/caregivers are required to accompany children to and from church functions.** New or visiting parents will be introduced to the teachers. Parents must sign their child into and out of RE or childcare. If the child is to be released to another responsible party the parent/caregiver must indicate this to the staff.
- 6. SMART is a team of Church leaders educated on the issues of Sexual Abuse and Misconduct.** At a minimum, the committee meets once a year to review this policy and suggest continuing education for the board and congregation. The continuing education can include a range of topics on sexual abuse awareness, right relations or other relevant topics. It may be presented to the congregation in a worship, as part of a meeting or through an awareness campaign. The committee is also responsible for reviewing any active cases and meeting at the appropriate intervals suggested by the behavior covenant(s).

7. **We ask members and affiliates to inform church leadership (Director of Religious Education, Minister or a member of the Board of Trustees) about a family member or if they themselves present with sexualized behaviors.** SMART will convene to make a risk assessment and create a safety plan.
8. **The Minister is available for policy development to SMART, but is not a part of their committee as the minister may be providing pastoral care for those involved.** As the Minister serves the unique role of providing pastoral care to the alleged perpetrator, which carries with it privileged communication, as well as ex-officio membership on the SMART, the Minister shall not be in the position of gathering information for the risk assessment unless an additional SMART member collaborates in the culling of such information. This prevents the Minister from being placed in a situation where he or she is unable to divulge information crucial to the risk assessment without breaking confidentiality. This also serves to protect the pastoral relationship from any action taken by the Board as recommended by the SMART.
9. **Upon learning of an incident of abuse or of someone who exhibits sexualized behavior outside of church, SMART will be convened within a week by the Minister or Director of Religious Education in order to make a risk assessment and make recommendations for the alleged perpetrators continued participation at Church.** If any activities involving the concerned individuals are planned in the interim, SMART will convene before the activities or an interim safety plan will be established.
10. **The Board will hold a special, closed meeting within a week of being notified SMART has come to a recommendation for the Board.**-The sole item on the agenda will be the incident of abuse and SMART's recommendation for action. The Board will consider the situation, what information is to be made known to the congregation as a whole, and how to disseminate that information. Each incident of abuse will be taken on a case-by-case basis. (See the "Incident Procedure")
11. **The SMART, in conjunction with other Church staff, will ensure that all incidents of abuse at the Church or church-related activity are well documented.**
12. **The Board will oversee church activities and roles and enforce consequences upon any individual who has engaged in inappropriate physical, emotional, or sexual behavior with another person at the church or church-related activity**
13. **SMART will maintain a policy and procedure manual.** It will be kept by the church office and will be updated regularly by SMART with current educational and resource information.

SMART: WHO IS ON IT?

The Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team (SMART) is responsible for making recommendations to the Board of Trustees regarding the process of dealing with offenders and victims of sexual abuse in the congregation. SMART will select a chair from within its membership. The team consists of:

- Board Chair (or designated Board representative),
- Director of Religious Education,
- Designated member of Religious Growth and Learning Council,
- Designated member of the Committee on Ministry and
- Minister, as an ex-officio member

If any of these positions are vacant, the Board can nominate a member-at-large until the position is filled.

If the incident in question concerns one of the above people as the possible abuser, that person will immediately recuse herself/himself from the team and the Board of Trustees will nominate a representative to serve on the team instead. If the alleged offender is a paid staff member of the church, then a member of the Personnel Committee will also serve on the team. If the Minister is the one accused, the Board Chair should contact the UUA Intake Person in the Office of Ethics and Safety at the UUA. Contact may be made by emailing safecongregations@uua.org or by postal mail at: UUA Intake Person, Office of Ethics and Safety, UUA, 24 Farnsworth Street, Boston, MA 02210.

SMART: WHAT DOES IT DO?

SMART MISSION STATEMENT: The mission of the Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team (SMART) is to help ensure an emotionally and physically safe environment for the church community in cases of sexual misconduct to and by any person – child or adult -- by providing guidelines for action to the Board of Trustees. We pledge, as a community, to honor the struggles of all, including victims, perpetrators, families, and the congregation.

SMART files shall be stored in the Minister’s office. Each incident where SMART is convened is given a separate case number and individuals can refer to that number instead of using names.

SMART will ensure that the victim and their family have access to counseling and other support services. The Minister will work with the offender to help them access support and mental health resources where appropriate.

SMART is also responsible for educating the volunteers, parents, and children of the congregation on the relevant issues and processes concerning the prevention of sexual misconduct and abuse.

SCREENING PROCEDURE

This document is a unique policy of Second Unitarian Church. The screening procedure applies, at a minimum to the following groups:

- Adult Volunteer in Children or Youth Programs

- Director of Education/Paid Staff (including childcare workers) who work in/with children's programs
- Board of Trustee candidates, prior to the individual's name being placed on the ballot

The screening procedure is as follows. The forms can be found in the reference section of this policy.

1. Every two years, all individuals listed above will be asked to submit to a background check and sign a code of ethics. For minors, forms must be signed by both the youth and a parent or legal guardian of the youth. These forms must be filled out before a youth can volunteer.
2. Prior to the annual meeting, all candidates for Board of Trustees positions will fill out an Information Form used to conduct background checks and also read and sign the Code of Ethics, as the Board of Trustees are responsible for actions taken by the church against a perpetrator. The background check and signing of the Code of Ethics will be completed by the Nominations Committee prior to the candidate being placed on the ballot. If the background check raises concerns, the candidate will not be eligible for election to the Board of Trustees.
3. Backgrounds will be completed by the Office Administrator using an outside service recommended by our insurance carrier, Church Mutual.
4. If a person is on an offender's list, the information will be passed onto the SMART. SMART will convene and determine a risk assessment. SMART then notifies the Board that a documented sex offender is serving in a capacity specified above. The Board considers what and how much information should be disseminated to the congregation on a case-by-case basis. The individual in question shall recuse herself/himself from participating in any decisions made concerning their case.
5. Screening forms will be kept confidential in the office administrator's locked files.
6. Anyone who has been convicted of either child sexual abuse or physical abuse cannot volunteer to assist with children or youth in any church sponsored activity or program until it is reviewed by SMART.
7. If a person is on an offender's list, the information will be passed onto the SMART. SMART will convene and perform a risk assessment of the situation. SMART then notifies the Board that a documented sex offender is attending the congregation and has attempted to participate in the RE and/or childcare programs. The Board considers what and how much information should be disseminated to the congregation on a case-by-case basis.
8. All youth volunteers will have an adult supervisor present on church grounds while they are volunteering with children.
9. Paid Staff/Childcare Workers/DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

- a. Application for employment needs to be on file including a resume.
 - b. Documented personal interviews with Minister and Personnel Committee need to be on file. Childcare workers can have a documented personal interview solely with the Director of Religious Education.
 - c. Documented reference check of at least three references needs to be on file.
 - d. Code of Ethics and release of liability for background information need to be signed and kept on file.
 - e. Criminal background check may be performed and kept on file.
 - f. All youth who are paid childcare workers must attend training with DRE and complete a code of ethics.
 - g. Screening forms need to be filled out before a youth can participate as a paid childcare worker. All childcare workers need to fill out a form for each current Church year.
 - h. All youth will have an adult supervisor present on church grounds while they are taking care of children.
10. **Minister:** All procedures will be followed according to the UUA's *Interim and Consulting Ministries Handbook* and *Settlement Handbook*. Each has application procedures and background checks for the appropriate position. This is applicable regardless of the type of minister-(developmental, interim, youth, settled, etc).

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

A. Board of Trustees and Minister

Once a year, the Board of Trustees will learn about safe congregations, which could include a range of topics on sexual abuse awareness, right relations or other relevant topics. The board can decide the specific topic(s) to be covered, with input from the SMART as to what topic(s) might be most helpful. This opportunity can occur during the normal course of a board meeting or during Board orientation or a retreat.

B. Adult and Youth Volunteers and Paid Staff in Children's and Youth Programming

At least once a year, all volunteers and paid staff in children's and youth programming will learn about our safe congregation policy and how it applies to them during training. The Director of Religious Education will coordinate this training.

Topics could include classroom management, sexual abuse awareness, right relations or other relevant topics. Youth must attend the training offered by the church to participate or show proof of training through another approved organization such as the Red Cross.

C. Parent/Child/Congregation Safe Congregation Education

Communication about our safe congregation policy will be provided online. Parents will be made aware of and have online access to the safe congregation policy in that communication. Other avenues of promotion of the policy (including at registration, during a tour or on display) are welcomed. SMART will coordinate this training.

D. Director of Religious Education

At least once a year, the Director of Religious Education will read and document a book on a Safe Congregation topic, take an online class, receive OWL training or attend a continuing education class on an appropriate topic. Documentation will be kept in personnel file. This education will be documented annually by the Minister during the DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION's personnel evaluation.

DOCUMENTATION OF AN INCIDENT OF SUSPECTED ABUSE

All persons who suspect abuse are considered mandatory reporters by Nebraska State Law.

Sometimes an individual who has experienced abuse will confide in you. Your response needs to be considerate and not reactionary. Believe the individual (child or adult). Be an active listener. Let the child know that you CARE. Reassure the person (but don't promise solutions you can't affect). Focus on the person's needs, not your reactions.

Provide a caring, supportive response to a victim with active listening. It is important to remember this is not an investigation.

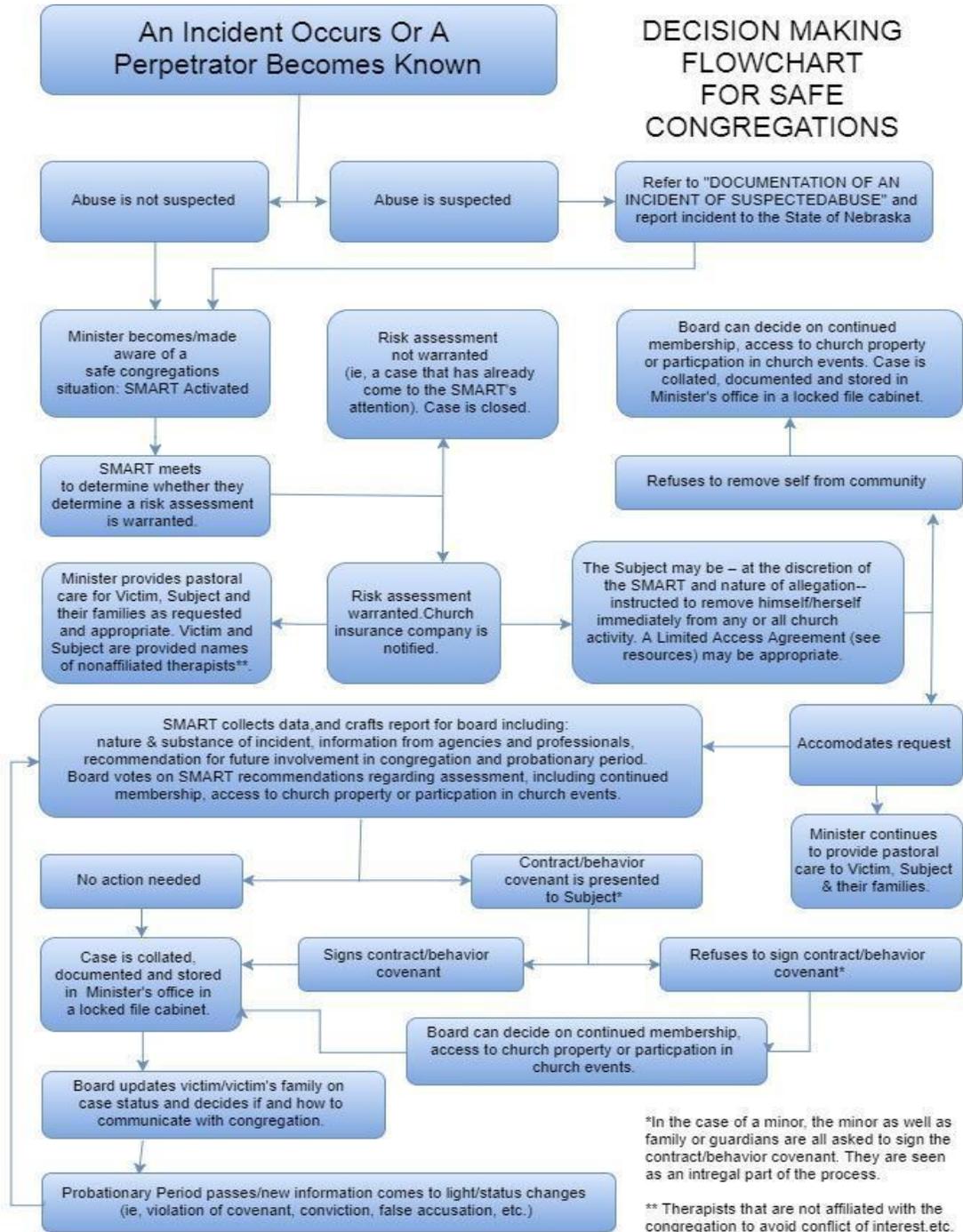
Do not put blame or suspicion onto the victim.

Be sensitive to the need for confidentiality. Reports of probable abuse are made to the DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION or the Minister. When you are unsure, discuss the situation with one of those two only. **Do not contact an involved child or parents.** Refer to page for a resource for making a report to civil authorities. Reporting of a suspected incident to proper civil authorities will be the responsibility of the Minister, Director of Religious Education, and the person who became aware of the suspected abuse.

Furthermore, state law requires any person who suspects that a child has been physically or sexually abused or neglected to report it promptly to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Do not use e-mail to report cases of abuse. If there is an emergency, call local law enforcement immediately.

DECISION MAKING FLOWCHART FOR AN INCIDENT

Providing an overview of the policy. Specifics can be found in the following section, Incident Procedure.



INCIDENT PROCEDURE

“There are generally a few ways that the presence of a convicted sex offender becomes known in a congregation. In an ideal world, a person with this background would come to the minister before they started coming to the congregation to discuss limits on their participation. Sex offender treatment specialists often encourage their clients to do just that. One community facing this issue wrote, “The Board’s response to this situation would have been made easier if, before becoming so deeply involved in church activities, the individual had approached our church, explained his situation, asked whether there was some arrangement under which he could participate, and then awaited our response.” This is probably not often the case. In some cases, people reveal their backgrounds to the ministers. In other circumstances, another congregant may discover a congregant’s history of sexual offenses. Congregants should know that in these cases they should make their concern known to the minister. In other cases, someone may see a familiar name on the sex offender registry. Or, perhaps it becomes known that a longstanding member of the congregation has been accused of a sexual offense.”

Rev. Debra Haffner, Balancing Acts

There are many different situations that can be encountered. All of them, however, can be managed with the same procedure with minor changes to accommodate the situation. Here are just some of the possible situations a congregation might encounter:

- A convicted sex offender who volunteers information about their crime before joining a congregation and who wants to become involved in the congregation
- A beloved staff member of several years who did not disclose a past conviction
- Sexual misconduct occurring outside congregational life that becomes known to the congregation through the media (news or social)
- Child perpetrator with a history of sexual predation of other children (usually a victim themselves)
- An adult abusing an elderly adult at an off-site, church sponsored activity
- A youth and adult in an apparently consensual relationship.

In the procedure below, the individual involved in the focus of SMART will be referred to as the “Subject” regardless of whether there is a conviction, it is in the court system, there are only allegations, or the individual is a minor.

- 1) If someone suspects abuse, please follow the recommendations on page first.
- 2) The Minister (or, in the case of the Minister’s absence, the DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION or Board Chair) should act as quickly as possible to contact the Subject and discuss the issues that have been raised. The Minister may want to check the-National Sex Offender Registry and the Child Abuse and Neglect lists before meeting with the Subject. If the Subject has a partner or family members who is/are also a part of the

congregation, the Minister should make an effort to reach out to them as well, with expressed permission by the Subject.

- 3) When an incident of sexual misconduct is perpetrated by a participant in Second Unitarian's congregation and becomes known to the congregation, the Board and SMART must take action to ensure the safety of both the congregation and the perpetrator and to regulate the dissemination of information in the congregation.
- 4) The Minister should convene SMART in order to assess whether there is sufficient concern to warrant a risk assessment. After the State of Nebraska (Department of Health and Human Services or police) has been notified of the incident, or the suspicion of an incident, SMART can contact a qualified therapist outside the congregation. The role of the therapist is to advise the congregation on resources and decisions and to provide a referral, if desired, for treatment for both the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator. It is advised that the therapist have no connection with the congregation (i.e., not be a member).
- 5) If a risk assessment is deemed warranted, the Subject may be – at the discretion of SMART and nature of allegation² -- instructed to remove himself/herself immediately from any church activity until the Board of Trustees can meet to determine a course of action. A Limited Access Agreement (see resources) may be appropriate.
- 6) SMART will also contact the Church's insurance company. They will provide the necessary information required by the Church's liability policy.
- 7) Once the necessary information has been gathered and a risk assessment conducted, a meeting of the Board of Trustees is called. SMART reports to the Board the nature and substance of the suspected incident as well as any conversations with the State, the insurance company, and the mental health professional. Additionally, SMART makes recommendations to the Board regarding ways to provide safe access, if appropriate, to limited church functions by the alleged perpetrator based on a risk assessment conducted in coordination with professionals involved in the case (i.e., therapists, law enforcement, social services, etc...). This might include use of a Limited Access agreement as in Balancing Acts by Rev. Debra Haffner or in the resources section of this policy.
- 8) If there are pending legal charges, the Minister will work with the subject to address his/her spiritual needs pending the resolution of the legal case. After the process of adjudication, SMART will conduct a more detailed risk assessment based on factual information available to them through contact with law enforcement, court judgment and mental health care providers.
- 9) The Board determines how, when, and what information regarding the suspected incident is communicated to the congregation. The Board also determines whether to adopt recommendations made by the SMART. It is not the responsibility of the Board, or any other entity within the congregation, to investigate incidents of abuse. Such activity

² Refer to "Reasons for Excluding an Offender from all congregational Activities" on .

can interfere with the legal investigation and have serious consequences. This is left to the appropriate State appointed persons.

- 10) Subjects with past histories of sexual offenses may be asked to sign a Limited Access Agreement (see resources section for sample). If the Subject is a minor, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will also sign the agreement (see resources section for sample). Depending on the circumstances, the document may be renewed annually. If the Subject refuses to do so, then it is appropriate to deny the person access to congregation functions and church property. If necessary, the local police will be asked to assist in the enforcement of this policy. Once a case is in a probationary period, SMART will conduct an ongoing assessment of risk to determine adherence to the Limited Access agreement, or other guidelines established by the Board, every six months, or as determined by SMART (i.e., a child subject may need a review every 3 months, other cases may go to an annual review). These findings will be reported to the Board and may include additional recommendations.
- 11) A determination of how to address the issue in the congregation will be made on a case by case basis and action taken by SMART or Board of Trustees will reflect thoughtfulness and discretion for both the perpetrator and the members of the congregation who may be vulnerable to this issue. The Minister will also make him/herself available for pastoral care to the general membership of the congregation post-incident, depending on how the matter is communicated/affects the congregation as a whole. The Minister and DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION will provide pastoral referrals for Subjects, victims and their families of sexual abuse and misconduct.
- 12) SMART will continue to meet as necessary to monitor compliance of the perpetrator during any probationary period determined by the Limited Access Agreement. New members coming into SMART will be debriefed as each case comes up for review.
- 13) Once a disposition has been determined for a case, a case summary is completed by SMART and is filed with all relevant materials in a secured place in the minister's office. Should the disposition of a case change, a new case summary will be completed and an updated risk assessment will be made to ensure that all information regarding appropriate engagement in congregational life is based on recent information.

REASONS FOR EXCLUDING AN OFFENDER FROM ALL CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Adapted from Rev. Debra Haffner's Balancing Acts

1. Refusal to allow the Minister and SMART member to contact the treatment provider and probation/parole officer.
2. Refusal to go for a risk assessment or attend treatment with a qualified therapist.
3. Report by a treatment provider that the individual is at too high a risk for recidivism.
4. Refusal to sign a Limited Access Agreement.
5. Refusal to comply with the requirements of the Limited Access Agreement.
6. Non-adherence to the terms of probation or parole.
7. Non-compliance with treatment protocol as determined by treatment providers.

ONLINE SAFETY PRACTICES FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS

This document was created as a guide for youth participants of YRUU, and has been adapted for the Safe Congregation Policy.

Congregational participation has become available in a hybrid format; both in person and virtual. While this allows more opportunities to stay connected, it is important to remember the vulnerabilities associated with online communication, specifically for minors. We must ensure that the space, both in person and online, is as safe as possible for all participants.

Virtual participation leaves people of all ages vulnerable to potential predators who may be intent on obtaining their personal information for fraudulent purposes, sending sexually explicit or violent images and videos, or even attempts at grooming for the purposes of abuse. It is the responsibility of participating youth and adults to understand and practice online safety to protect themselves. It is the responsibility of adult staff and volunteers to moderate the chosen platform and watch out for “red flag” behavior, such as:

- Sharing of explicit or NSFW (not safe for work) content including, but not limited to, sexual, violent, racist, homophobic/transphobic, etc... words or images.
- Anonymity - anyone trying to gain access to communication who does not have a recognizable name and does not readily identify themselves when asked.
- Cyberbullying - using technology to send intimidating or threatening messages to or about another person.
- Requests for personal information including, but not limited to, one’s age, gender, address, location, etc... that could be used in a harmful way.
- Isolation - requests to chat one on one, away from moderators’ supervision, particularly by a person who is not known outside of their online persona.
- Toxic culture- Trolls and other confrontational types who want a place to express extreme views. The interactions are often laced with bullying, sexism, hate speech, and other cruelties that can escalate quickly.

We want to be sure that every person can feel safe to relax and speak openly to get the most out of their online church experiences, and part of that is making sure that all participants understand that the staff and volunteers are in place to keep them safe.

Because the line from consensual to non-consensual behavior can be crossed so easily, we cannot take the risk of abuse happening in our programs. While sexuality is a healthy and important part of each person’s life, there are times and places where sexual behavior is inappropriate, such as in a church sponsored group, be that in-person or online.

Recommended practices for youth:

1. When choosing preferred virtual communication methods a platform must be chosen that does not automatically delete messages and/or images. (example: Snapchat)
2. All adult staff and volunteers acting as moderators are responsible for enforcing rules and reporting any activity that violates the rules of the virtual space to a staff member (minister, administrator, DRE).

3. The most restrictive settings should be in place for any chosen platform and the settings will be re-visited each year. For example: Participants should receive an invitation by their group leader to join any online group. Whenever possible, moderator permission should be required to admit a newcomer. No new person shall be admitted to the group without sharing their full name. Nicknames, tag lines, descriptions, profile pictures, and avatars are subject to safety rules and participants will be asked to change them if deemed inappropriate.
4. All account management and login information must be submitted to the church administrator, as well as changes to login information.
5. All requests to join must be approved by a moderator. Moderators are responsible for ensuring that the prospective member is indeed affiliated with Second Unitarian Church. This is to avoid potential abuse by online predators.
6. Shared memes or other images may be removed at the moderators' discretion and disciplinary action may be taken. Most memes are silly or thought-provoking, offering commentary or satire on various topics and news events but some memes can be racist, sexist or homophobic, and serve to perpetuate these and other societal harms.

RECOMMENDED VIRTUAL SAFETY PRACTICES FOR ADULT LEADERS OF YOUTH PROGRAMMING

Safety precautions need to be taken to protect youth in virtual and physical spaces alike. Just as we advise adults not to be alone with youth in physical spaces, the same applies online. We are always wanting another set of eyes, a record of our online communications, and permissions from parents about how we may communicate with their youth (given the ever growing number of platforms).

One-on-one communication should be avoided whenever possible, such as by copying another adult on an email/text/message or adding another adult to an existing conversation.

As always, any communication wherein an adult becomes aware of harm to self or others including, but not limited to, self-harm, suicidal ideation, child abuse, sexual crimes against a minor, and bullying, must be shared as quickly as possible with a youth's parents and with the church's safety team.

We recognize that the area of social media and electronic communications are a difficult one for adults working with youth. These forms of communication are necessary to communication, leadership, and planning. They are also forms of communication which both predatory adults and adults with poor boundaries can harm youth.

We want our adult leaders to be able to be effective in their leadership and communication. We want youth to feel supported by their adult leaders and feel able to reach out when they need to. It is never appropriate to put the responsibility for appropriate means of communication on the youth's shoulders. We therefore want to create a culture through these expectations that thrives on transparency for the protection of both youth and adults.

Please observe the following recommended practices:

1. Any social media network or app being used shall not be one where posts are automatically deleted (such as Snapchat)
2. Posts and discussions are visible to others (no one-on-one conversations).
3. Adults stay in an appropriate adult role in posting, content, discussion, and moderation.
4. Both adults and youth understand that the use of technology in faith-based organizations should be visible by more than one adult, observable and monitored by YRUU staff and volunteers.
5. Adults and youth understand that any communication that happens outside of the guidelines is expected to be reported to the responsible volunteers or staff.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR ADULT VOLUNTEERS³

Adults will seek parent/guardian permission before communicating with youth and include an opportunity for the parent/guardian to limit interaction. Parents have the right to be copied on any communication they request. If they request to be added to group conversations, their role is only to witness and share any relevant logistic information pertaining to their youth. They are encouraged to share any concerns about the group business with adult leaders or regional staff rather than participating in conversation. Parents and UUA staff have the right to ask to view any communication between adult volunteers and youth.

When communicating electronically with youth, adults must include a second adult on the message or communication. If a youth contacts an adult one on one, the adult has the responsibility to redirect the conversation to add a second adult to the communication and/or redirect the conversation to the appropriate platform.

If it is necessary to have a virtual one-on-one interaction between a youth/adult, the adult will:

- Let other people know (staff and/or parent guardian) you will be communicating, around what time, and what about.
- Make sure there is a record of the conversation, including recording phone calls. Documentation should be archived for no less than 12 years.

Adult volunteers and staff are expected to stay in “adult role” on any social media platform in which their posts are visible to youth. This means posts are appropriate for youth to view and are not sexualized, discriminatory, harassing, or otherwise contrary to the rules and philosophy of this policy and UU values.

³ Part of [UUA Youth Safety Guidelines](#)

RESOURCE MATERIAL

RESOURCE AGENCIES:

Child Abuse Hotline

- Nebraska: 1-800-652-1999
- Iowa: 1-800-362-2178

Project Harmony:

- 402-595-1326

Project Harmony exists to provide effective, immediate and sensitive support to child abuse victims and their non-offending family members.

Women's Center for Advancement:

- Office- 403-345-6555
- 24 hour confidential hotline 402-345-7273

The WCA assists anyone in the Omaha area who is experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking.

Methodist Hospital SANE/SART (sexual assault nurse examiner/ sexual assault response team):

- Help is available 24/7 at (402) 354-4424 or (712) 396-6111

This is a program for survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, elder abuse and human trafficking. Exams are offered at the emergency departments at [Methodist Women's Hospital](#) and [Methodist Hospital](#) in Omaha and [Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital](#) in Council Bluffs.

REQUIRED MATERIAL FOR OFFENDER RISK ASSESSMENT

In providing adequate information to the Board of Trustees regarding the potential risk of a sexual offender to commit subsequent acts, it must be stressed that making predictions about recidivism is very difficult, even for specially trained mental health professionals. Therefore, recommendations should be made based on as much available material as possible and should err on the side of conservatism to protect both the congregation and the offender.

The following information should be used as the basis of risk assessment and to draft probationary conditions of membership as described in a Limited Access Agreement:

- a) The offender's ability or willingness to comply with withdrawal from all church activity until a Limited Access Agreement has been approved by the Board of Trustees.
- b) An initial conversation with each of the therapists associated with the offender's treatment to be conducted by the Minister in conjunction with a member of the SMART. It will be necessary for the individual to sign a release of information for these conversations to occur.
- c) If legal action has occurred, an initial conversation with the probation or parole officer involved in monitoring legal compliance of the individual to be conducted by the Minister in conjunction with a member of the SMART. It will be necessary for the individual to sign a release of information for this conversation to occur.
- d) Ongoing, regular treatment with an individual and/or group therapist who is a member in good standing of ATSA (The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers).
- e) During the probationary period, regular contact with the therapists and the probation/parole officer by the Minister and a member of SMART should be maintained every six months to ensure ongoing treatment and legal compliance. Revisions to the Limited Access Agreement may be suggested to the Board of Trustees based on these interactions, if deemed necessary.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATIONS WITH THERAPISTS AND/OR PROBATION/PAROLE OFFICERS:

1. What are your credentials and training?
2. What professional organizations are you a member of? (ATSA?)
3. Is treatment mandated and, if so, for how long?
4. What is the frequency of treatment or contact required for probation/parole (if applicable)?
5. Are you aware of any other offenses committed either inside or outside of the state of Nebraska?
6. How long has the individual been in treatment with you?
7. Are there other therapists involved in the case (individual, group, family, ~~etc....~~)?
8. What sort of behavioral modification program or therapeutic model do you use?
9. Does the individual make constructive use of therapy?
10. Is the individual making progress in treatment? Are you satisfied with the pace that he/she is working at?
11. Does your treatment include a relapse prevention model? If so, what is included?
12. What steps is the individual taking in reducing his/her risk to others?
13. Can you give a rudimentary basic risk assessment of the individual given his/her work in therapy? How much is he/she currently able to participate safely in congregational activities?
14. In your opinion, is the individual able to accept responsibility for his/her actions and behaviors?
15. Do you think the individual has a sufficient amount of impulse control and affect regulation to participate safely in church activities?
16. What role do you see the church playing in the individual's recovery? In the recovery of the individual's partner and/or family?
17. What changes would you like to see the individual make before you would feel confident that it would be safe for him/her to return to church and participate fully in activities that involve families and children?
18. If the individual were attending your church, what safety guidelines would you like to see in place?

RESOURCE MATERIAL

19. To your knowledge, what kinds of behavioral guidelines have other churches put into action in situations similar to this one?
20. What red flags should we be looking for or incorporate in our contract with the individual?
21. What do you believe to be a compassionate response on the part of the church to possible relapse down the line?
22. Can you recommend any specific actions that the church can take to support the partner and family of the individual in this process?
23. If the individual determines that he/she will comply with the church's guidelines, are you available (with the appropriate signed release) for us to check in periodically to monitor continued progress in treatment and to update our risk assessment information?

SMART CASE SUMMARY FORM

Date:

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Case #:

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Concerned Parties:

SMART Members & Roles (i.e., Minister, DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, Member At Large, etc.):

Board Members:

RESOURCE MATERIAL

Case Management:

	Referral of Case to Minister, DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION or Board Member
	SMART Convened
	First Contact with Concerned Party(ies)
	Last Contact with Concerned Party(ies)
	Report to CPS (Child Protective Services) or APS (Adult Protective Services) (if applicable)
	Board Action

Outside Consultation Sought by Team (names, positions and phone numbers)	

Current Disposition of Case:

Resolved: Reintegration into Church Community

Resolved: Mandated Removal from Church Community

Resolved: Voluntary Removal from Church Community

Pending Resolution:

Participating under Limited Access Agreement (probationary period terminates

Necessary Information Withheld by Concerned Part(ies)

Dismissed ~ please explain:

Other ~ please explain:

Please include additional information on back of sheet.

FORM TO ASSIST IN REPORTING AN INCIDENT OF SUSPECTED ABUSE

Any adult who suspects abuse is a mandated reporter by State of Nebraska State Law. This form is to assist this individual when reporting an incident to CPS (Child Protective Services) or APS (Adult Protective Services). The role of the appropriate agency is to conduct a thorough investigation and minimize victim trauma. Therefore, only use the information you have from the initial point of contact with the victim.

Please provide as much of the information below as you could obtain from the victim. Again, this is **not** an investigation and you should not go back to the victim to ask leading questions. Please consult with the Minister or Director of Religious Education if you have questions in filling out this form.

Name, age, gender, address, telephone numbers of victim:

Name, age, gender, address, telephone numbers of alleged perpetrator:

Nature of alleged abuse:

Duration of alleged abuse:

If possible, date and location of incident(s):

Relationship between victim and alleged perpetrator:

If possible, other evidence that helps support allegation:

CODE OF ETHICS (COVENANT? HOW TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN DIFFERENT COVENANTS?) FOR ADULT LEADERS

A covenant between our congregation and our children & youth

Adults working with children and youth in the context of our Unitarian Universalist faith have a crucial and privileged role, one which may carry with it a great deal of power and influence. Whether in the role of teacher, nursery care-giver, minister, Director of Religious Education, youth advisor, chaperone, or board member, the adults of our congregation have special opportunities to interact with our young people in ways which are affirming and inspiring both to the youth and the adult. Adults can be trusted mentors, role models and valued friends of our children and youth. To facilitate growth and self-discovery in a child, to help them grow to be caring and responsible adults, can be a meaningful and joyful experience for the adult as well as provide a lifetime of benefit to the child or youth.

While it is important adults can maintain meaningful friendships with the children/youth they work with, we must always exercise good judgment, wisdom and mindfulness regarding the impact of our interactions. Young people are in a vulnerable position, and when dealing with adults, they may find it difficult to speak out when they feel an adult's behavior is inappropriate.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of our entire church community, not just those in leadership positions to create and maintain a climate which supports, enhances and celebrates the growth and welfare of our children and youth.

I understand adults who are in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering the spiritual development of both the individual and the community. I recognize the importance of those interacting with our children/youth be well-qualified to provide special care, nurture and support that will enable our children/youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility. I recognize that the relationship between young people and their adult mentors must be one of mutual respect if the positive potential of the relationship is to be realized.

I acknowledge the importance of self-worth and the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being. I understand, as an adult volunteer in our congregation, I will play a key role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth. I am aware children, youth and adults suffer damaging effects when mentors become sexually involved with the young persons in their care. Therefore, I commit to refrain from any behavior which may be sexual, seductive, or erotic with our children and youth. Furthermore, I will not sexually harass or engage in any behavior which constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse. While performing my stewardship duties, I will abstain from any influence of illegal substances, alcohol or any other drug which may impair my judgment or ability to function effectively in a leadership role with our children and youth.

By signing this, I agree to enter into this covenant with the children and youth of our congregation and I will conduct myself in accordance with this code. I understand appropriate action, as outlined in our church's Safe Congregation Policies, will be taken if this code is violated.

Signature

Date

ADULT VOLUNTEER OR PAID STAFF INFORMATION FORM

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, BOARD MEMBER, SMART MEMBER OR PAID STAFF ARE ALL REQUIRED TO FILL OUT.

This form is to be completed by all volunteers for any positions involving the supervision or custody of minors. There is a separate form for youth. This form is being used to help the church provide safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding. **Your responses will be kept confidential.**

Name			
Aliases or alternate names:			
Home Phone:		Best time(s) to reach:	
Mobile Phone:		Best time(s) to reach:	
Work Phone:		Best time(s) to reach:	
Email:			
Address: (if not same as in directory)			
How long have you lived at your present address?			
If you have not lived in your current town for 5 years, please list the cities and states where you have lived for the last 5 years:			
How long have you attended Second Unitarian Church?			

The disturbing and traumatic rise of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation and society. The following principles reflect our commitment to provide protective care of all children, youth and volunteers who participate in church sponsored activities.

- Adults who have been convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse cannot volunteer to assist children or youth in any church sponsored activity or program.
- All adult volunteers are required to have regularly attended Second Unitarian Church for a minimum of six months prior to volunteering with youth or children.

YOUTH PAID/VOLUNTEER INFORMATION FORM

This form is to be completed by all teen volunteers (18 or below) for any positions involving the supervision or custody of minors. This form is being used to help the church provide safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding. **Your responses will be kept confidential.**

Name			
Aliases or alternate names:			
Home Phone:		Best time(s) to reach:	
Mobile Phone:		Best time(s) to reach:	
Work Phone:		Best time(s) to reach:	
Email:			
Address: (if not same as in directory)			
How long have you lived at your present address?			
If you have not lived in your current town for 5 years, please list the cities and states where you have lived for the last 5 years:			
List a parent/guardian or sponsor who attends Second Unitarian Church.			

The disturbing and traumatic rise of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation and society. The following principles reflect our commitment to provide protective care of all children and youth who participate in church sponsored activities.

- Teens must have either a parent/guardian attending First or Second Unitarian Church or be sponsored by a member of First or Second Unitarian Church.
- Teens must observe the **two-person rule**. This requires that teens are never alone with children or youth without an adult partner. Where it is not practical to have two approved people present, the door must be left open. The adult should not be a member of the same household as the youth.
- Teens must immediately report any behaviors which may seem abusive or inappropriate to the Director of Religious Education or Minister.
- The ministry of touch is understood to be a valuable, sometimes even needed dimension of children/youth ministries. But it can also open the door of vulnerability if given inappropriately. A warm handshake or handclasp is always appropriate, as is an arm

RESOURCE MATERIAL

around a hurting child or a brief hug of greeting or approval. Such displays, however, must **always** be done in the presence of other people, **never** in an isolated situation. Any indication from the child/youth of discomfort with such a display must be honored immediately. **Any unreasonable or inappropriate touching is forbidden.**

All the above information I have given is truthful and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I have read and agree to observe the safeguards listed above.

Youth's Name (printed)

Parent/Guardian's name (printed)

Youth's Signature

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Date Signed

Date Signed

BEHAVIOR COVENANT SAMPLE

Second Unitarian Church of Omaha affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who choose to worship with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. However, based on your background, we have concerns about your contact with other members of our church community. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk to both you and them of an incident or accusation. We welcome you to our congregation and our membership but your participation will be limited in ways to ensure the safety of all and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations.

Agreement:

You understand that you will not be allowed to be alone with other children and adolescents at any time, including in children's religious education classes, talks with children/adolescents during worship, youth group, children's and adolescents' activities during intergenerational events, and carpooling with children and young people. *(SMART: Adjust wording as needed for the situation.)*

The following activities checked "Yes" are activities that we feel are appropriate for your participation.

Activity	No	Yes	With Support Person ⁴
Worship services			
Coffee Hour			
Adult meetings with children in building, such as choir			
Adult meetings without children in building			
Have a key to the building			
Intergenerational church activities			
Intergenerational group outings (i.e., ice skating, service learning project, visiting other faith community, etc.)			
Alone in building with minister or other staff			
Access to church computer			
Social activities in other member's homes with children present			
Other Activity:			
Other Activity:			

I accept that the following people will be told of my circumstances:

⁴ A support person is a person who knows about your history/situation and has been designated by you with our approval to accompany you to activities where deemed necessary.

RESOURCE MATERIAL

- INSERT NAMES AND/OR POSITION IN CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP (IE, Religious Education teachers)

I have reviewed this covenant and agree to abide by its provisions. I agree that if I violate this agreement, I may be denied access to future church functions and church property.

I understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly every six months (or enter appropriate timeframe) and will remain for an indefinite period until closed by the SMART.

Subject Name (printed)

Subject's Signature

SMART: Keep Parent/Guardian signature line only for cases involving Minor Subjects.

Parent/Guardian's name (printed)

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Witness name (printed)

Witness Signature

Date signed by all above

Minister

Date Signed

Director/Minister Religious Education

Date Signed

Board Chair Signature

Date Signed

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Credit goes to a variety of resources in creating this document:

- Haffner, Debra. Balancing Acts: keeping children safe in congregations. (2004, Fall)
Retrieved September, 2006 from
<http://archive.uua.org/cde/ethics/balancing/BalancingAct.pdf>
- Hoertdoerfer, P., Hoertdoerfer, P. & Muir, F. (Eds.). (2005). Creating Safe Congregations; Toward an Ethic of Right Relationships – A Workbook for Unitarian Universalists. Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.
- *Our Whole Lives*, life-span sexuality curricula of the UUA
- Reducing the Risk II: Making your Church Safe from Child Sexual Abuse. Authors: James F. Cobbe, Jr., Richard R. Hammer & Steven V. Klipowicz
- Various safe congregation policies from other churches, especially that of The First Unitarian Society of Schenectady, New York

SMART will be responsible for keeping these materials available and finding more current materials as time goes on. The Director of Religious Education and/or Office Administrator will be responsible for keeping electronic copies of this policy and making it available electronically to anyone who requests it, including on the church website.