



First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis

Safety Policy, Code of Ethics, and Background Check Release

For Teachers, Volunteers and Staff

Welcome, and thank you for volunteering to be a part of our work with children and youth! We have some policies in place to ensure a safe, respectful environment for people of all ages. Please read the following guidelines carefully.

Safety Policy for Adults Working with Children and Youth

In your work with children and youth (defined as people ages 0 to 18), please remember that we teach more by *how* we interact and treat the young people in our care than by what we say in words. The ways we act in relationship to one another, and the behavioral expectations you set, communicate to our children and youth that how we treat one another here is more important than anything else we learn or do in class. We try to put our Unitarian Universalist (“UU”) values into practice by treating ourselves and others with respect and kindness, and we challenge ourselves and others to have open minds, loving hearts and helping hands.

Health and Safety:

- Do not leave children and youth unaccompanied during First Unitarian Society (FUS) programming. Youth ages 12 and older, with parental permission, may move around the building unaccompanied before and after programming.
- Do not use alcohol, tobacco or drugs during any FUS sponsored programming.
- Do not have firearms or weapons present while engaging in FUS programming.
- If transporting youth, always insist everyone wear seat belts while in the car.
- Have adequate personal liability and automobile insurance coverage. If you plan to transport children or youth, you must have a copy of your current driver’s license and proof of insurance on file with a staff member.

Adult/Minor Ratios:

Every effort will be made to maintain the following ratios during all FUS-sponsored events.

- Infant (0-23 months) – 4 infants to 1 adult
- Young child (24 months-5 years) – 6 children to 1 adult
- School-age child (6-11 years) – 8 children to 1 adult
- Youth (12-17 years) – 10 youth to 1 adult

We ask that two adult volunteers are present in classrooms at all times. If you are in a classroom by yourself, ask a parent to stay until another adult arrives.

Congregational Care Concerns, Confidentiality and Mandatory Reporting:

- Congregational Care: As an Ethical Education teacher or volunteer you have a very special relationship with our children and youth. Children or youth may share something in Joys and Concerns or check-in that seem appropriate to direct to staff, so they can provide additional support, for example, divorce, births, deaths, illnesses, big victories, or other causes for celebration or sympathy. Always ask the child or youth if you may share these issues with staff.

- **Confidentiality:** Let the children and youth know that what they say in class stays there unless an adult believes a child or youth is being physically, emotionally or sexually harmed by someone else. Self-harm such as cutting or other self-mutilation is also a reason to break confidentiality. If a child or youth or child tells you they are being harmed, chances are good they want you to do something about it. Invite them to talk with you and staff about the issue. *These types of concerns must be reported to staff immediately.*
- **Mandatory Reporting:** In Minnesota, there is a Mandatory Reporting Act that requires certain adults to report abuse or suspected abuse of minors to the authorities. As a volunteer at First Unitarian, you are NOT a mandatory reporter, even if you are usually one in your professional role: teacher, therapist, social worker, etc. If there is suspected abuse, report this to staff at First Unitarian. Staff, on behalf of the society, will decide if it is necessary and report this to the State.

Recordkeeping:

We maintain information pertaining to volunteer selection, such as background check consent forms, in a locked file cabinet for three years. We will then shred them. A new background check and ethics form must be signed semi-annually. This information will never be made public.

Responding to problematic behavior with clear boundaries, care and an invitation to connect:

When a child or youth is behaving in a way that is disruptive or disrespectful of their class, begin with the first level of intervention in the list below. If that doesn't work, move to the next intervention, and so on. Do not allow a problem behavior to continue unaddressed.

Safety is our first priority. If a participant's behavior poses a safety risk, start farther down the list with a more immediate, directive response to ensure no one gets hurt.

1. Ignore the behavior to see if it will cease
2. Make eye contact to let the child know you're "with" them
3. Make gentle verbal contact
4. Invite the child to engage in the lesson
5. Move closer to the child
6. Remind the child of your class expectations, and ask them to adjust their behavior accordingly
7. Ask the child to move to a different spot or task
8. Move with the child to a quiet spot to talk or regroup; ask the child what they need and tell them what you and the class need
9. Contact staff by phone or text to get additional help
10. With staff support, reach out to parents for more information and solutions

Please keep in mind that the creation of a safe, supportive, and fun class culture is our primary objective. Together, we provide an experience of community in which each person is accurately seen and respected as they are, included as part of the group, offered support and compassion, encouraged to explore and grow, and valued as someone possessing inherent worth.

Treating each person in this manner is a gift to all members and friends.

Code of Ethics for Adults Working with Children and Youth

Preamble

Our Unitarian Universalist values call us to practice mutual caring, respect and right relations. The Code of Ethics for Adults Working with Children and Youth at First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis seeks to cultivate these shared values through professional and volunteer relationships that nurture trust, fairness, compassion and good stewardship.

Code of Ethics

I will respect the diversity of spiritualities in our community and will not make my personal form of spiritual expression normative.

I will not speak disparagingly of any other First Unitarian congregants, ministers or staff in public. In conversations critical of others, I will speak responsibly and temperately.

I will refrain from the use of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs at any FUS-sponsored program when I am working with children and youth.

I will actively avoid any physical, verbal, or emotional interaction with children and youth that is sexual, erotic, suggestive, harassing, or abusive. I will not create, publish, or share any visual image or sound recording about or related to children and youth that is not pre-approved by the appropriate adults such as teachers, parents, and guardians. I will actively seek to avoid developing one-on-one or special friendships and relationships with children and youth, in any location and any medium, for example, on our premises, offsite, in person, online, via telephone, card, letter, or handwritten message.

I acknowledge that I may have access to confidential information and the power this gives me. I will seek counsel with FUS staff when I am concerned about the safety of an individual or a group.

I will actively pursue my own development and enrichment.

I shall be informed of the code of ethics and agree to it before assuming my role. In cases of violation of this code, appropriate action will be taken.

I shall submit required information and agree to a criminal background check before volunteering with children and youth at First Unitarian.

I have read the Safety Policy and Code of Ethics and agree to observe them.

Printed Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Background Check Release

Teachers, volunteers, and staff undergo criminal and sex offender background checks annually, via our payroll provider, Automatic Data Processing Inc (ADP).

- You will receive an email from us with a “consent to background check” attachment. Please fill out and return as soon as possible.
- You are entitled to copies of both the consent form and completed background check upon request.