

Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church
Religious Education Safety Policies and Agreements

Subject: Religious Education Safety Policies and Agreements Number:

Effective Date: 7.1.16

Approved by: Board of Trustees

Overview

This document contains Safety Policies and Agreements that the Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church (AUUC) Religious Education (RE) volunteers are required to read and comply with. These policies and agreements help to ensure our congregational environment is a safe and secure place for the children, youth and adults who are a part of the AUUC RE Program.

Definitions

- Child: An individual from birth through Grade 5
- Youth: An individual from rising Grade 6 through graduation from Grade 12.
- Chaperone, Advisor or Mentor: An individual with a signed RE Authorization for AUUC to conduct Confidential Screening and Criminal Background Investigations form. Youth chaperones, advisors and mentors must be 25 years or older; the DSD reserves the right to make exceptions to this rule with consultation with the minister and CSDC Chair.
- Driver: Chaperones, advisors and mentors with current insurance and a valid driver's license on file at AUUC. In addition, youth with a valid driver's license may drive self to off-site youth events. They may also drive other individuals in accordance with Virginia state law and permission of parents/guardians.
- RE Staff: Paid RE staff including the Director of Spiritual Development (DSD).
- RE Volunteer: Anyone who regularly volunteers in the RE program in any capacity, including as a teacher, workshop leader, chaperone, advisor, mentor, Children's Spiritual Development Committee (CSDC) member, or greeter. An individual with a signed RE Authorization for AUUC to conduct Confidential Screening and Criminal Background Investigations form.
- Parent Assistant: A supervised volunteer with a short-term RE role, usually one to three times.
- Child Caregiver: Paid caregiver with a signed RE Authorization for AUUC to conduct Confidential Screening and Criminal Background Investigations form on file.

RE Volunteers

Volunteers shall comply with these policies:

1. All volunteers should have participated in the life of the AUUC community for 6 months prior to volunteering in the RE Program. The DSD may make an exception, including if a person has previously volunteered at another Unitarian Universalist community and provides contact information for at least two references from the former DRE or minister of that community, or is a well-known person to the ministers or RE staff.
2. Each volunteer must complete and sign the last page of this document and return it to the RE office prior to beginning work with children or youth.
3. No person who has a history of crimes against children or pending legal action involving children may volunteer in the RE program.
4. A person who is subject to pending legal action for violent or belligerent behavior - whether or not at AUUC and whether or not involving children - may not volunteer in the RE program. Any current volunteers must disclose new or pending legal actions to the DSD and remove themselves from the program.
5. Volunteer mentors spending time individually with children or youth outside of the Sunday morning program must do so only with explicit parental permission.
6. The DSD, in consultation with the CSDC chair, determines volunteer teams and strives to make decisions that promote a safe and nurturing environment for all.

Annual Volunteer Training Workshops

All volunteers are expected to attend annual RE training (teachers have training at least twice each year) and are required to read the RE Teachers' Manual, which is updated annually, provided in a hard copy or by email, and posted on the AUUC website. If unable to attend training, the volunteer must contact the DSD for information. Training includes safety procedures, standard practices related to the duties of the volunteer position and child development information.

Safety Procedures

All those working with AUUC's minors, including adult child care staff and volunteers, are encouraged to have up-to-date first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and automated external defibrillation (AED) training. All staff and volunteers are expected to know:

1. Evacuation procedures for fire, lockdown for intruders, tornado and shelter-in-place.
2. Location of fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and AED.
3. Special needs and allergies for children in their care (as provided by parents and shared by RE staff).

Reporting Abuse

1. No minister, DSD, adult leader, child caregiver, RE volunteer or other person working under the auspices of AUUC shall engage in sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with young people under the age of 18 years; or sexually harass or engage in behavior with young people that constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.
2. Any volunteer or RE staff member who suspects child abuse, including cases of child-on-child abuse, shall report their suspicions to a Minister, the DSD or a member of the Board of Trustees, who shall report to the DSD or Minister. In those cases where cause exists, the appropriate staff person(s) will make appropriate reports to the authorities as required by law. If the action involves a volunteer in the RE program, the volunteer will be dismissed as described in the Safe Congregation Policy. In the event cause is not found to exist, reinstatement of the volunteer will be considered.
3. All AUUC staff and volunteers must promptly notify the DSD of any suspected volunteer misconduct. The DSD shall inform a minister immediately to determine appropriate action in accordance with the Disruptive Behavior / Sexual Harassment Policy.
4. Children and youth will be encouraged to report any concerns to RE staff or ministers.

Supervision of Children and Youth

1. There shall be at least two adults in any area with children or youth at all times. Volunteers shall immediately notify the DRE, RE Greeter or other AUUC staff whenever there are not at least two adults so that RE staff can assist in providing a second adult or provide for merging of groups for that activity. When it is not possible for two adults to be present at a AUUC-sponsored event or meeting, parents/guardians must be notified and give written or oral approval.
2. Children engaging in RE activities on AUUC property, including at the playground or in the woods, shall also be supervised. In an open area (i.e., for nature walks), one adult should lead the group and one should follow at the rear.
3. All volunteers are required to share concerns about children or youth with the DSD or Minister.
4. Parents are responsible for supervision of children and youth on AUUC property outside of organized RE classes and activities.
5. Volunteers may not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs when supervising children or youth.
6. Photographs or videos taken of children and youth must be approved in writing by parents/guardians.

Communication

1. All AUUC social media policies, as they are developed, must be followed.

2. Youth advisors will participate in social media training that includes their responsibility of advising AUUC staff of any concerns that arise during one-on-one or other communication with youth. AUUC staff will report concerns to a supervisor.
3. Youth program registration will include a statement that allows parents to opt out of individual texting, email, messaging or other electronic communications.
4. For all day-to-day communication between Advisors and Youth, a parent or guardian must be copied on the email or text. For any one-on-one or sensitive conversations, in-person discussion is preferred. However, if a youth member needs a safe space to share electronically, the Advisor must copy the DSD on all such communication in order to remain in compliance with AUUC's two-adult policy.
5. Group communications, such as video conferencing or online chats will be announced, often through email, to applicable parents/guardians.
6. Adults, youth and children will be encouraged to share any concerns they have with any AUUC staff or volunteers by discussing the concern with the DSD or minister.
7. Phone calls and other communication, including social media, from AUUC staff to youth or children will be concluded before 10 p.m. Staff will report aberrations to the DSD or minister.
8. AUUC staff is expected to retain records of all email, text and social media communication with youth or children for a period of 3 years for inspection.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

All children on AUUC premises must be accompanied by a parent or guardian or enrolled in AUUC programs in accordance with the procedures below. Parents are solely responsible for the safety and supervision of children whose presence at AUUC is not in accordance with these procedures.

- All minor children or youth must be enrolled in the RE program by their fourth visit.
- A parent or guardian of children up to and including Grade 8 must be on campus while the children participate in RE programs or are receiving nursery or child care, except in cases where the DSD has been notified of and approved the absence of the parent or guardian.
- Unaccompanied youth of Grade 9 or higher may attend AUUC non-Sunday morning RE events with their parents' or guardians' knowledge and permission.
- Children Grade 5 and younger must be dropped off and signed out at the end of class by a parent/guardian.
- A parent or guardian must provide medication needing to be delivered during an RE program or event, and instructions for delivering that medication, before the child can participate in said program or event.
- Parents or guardians of a child who is being disruptive at an RE program or event will be asked to intervene if needed.

Permission for Youth Conferences (Cons), Field Trips and Overnights at AUUC

1. The DSD must approve all off-campus field trips and overnights. Approval will include the consideration of age and developmental stages, transportation, costs and background-checked chaperones. If age restrictions preclude the entire group from attending, or the activity appears inappropriate, the field trip will not be approved. Volunteers must bring up potential conflicts when proposing a field trip to allow for full consideration by the DSD and Minister.
2. Information on all field trips and overnights involving children and youth should be received by the DSD at least 4 weeks in advance, but at a minimum 2 weeks in advance, in order to vet, promote and obtain permission forms from parents/guardians.
3. There must be a signed field-trip permission form for every child or youth under age 18 who will attend a field trip or stay overnight at AUUC. A youth who is 18 or older may provide his/her own emergency and medical information on a permission slip.
4. One copy of the permission slip shall be on file in the RE office. Chaperones shall carry a copy of the permission slips that contain emergency and medical information with them on any trip or overnight.
5. Parents must provide medication if appropriate and instruction for the medication delivery. Parents and chaperones must agree on how the medication will be administered prior to the event.

Volunteer/child or youth ratio for:

Field trips:

- Preschoolers 1 adult for every 3 children
- Gr. K-5 1 adult for every 5 children
- Gr. 6-12 1 adult for every 5 youth

Central East Regional Group-Sponsored Cons

- Gr. 9-12 1 adult advisor for every 5 youth

6. Overnights are supervised by the number of required adults (see above), with adults taking shifts as needed throughout the night.
7. If a person (an adult leader or youth) has been asked not to participate in our program, we will share that information with other UU-affiliated children and youth-related programs such as Youth Cons.

Drivers for Field Trips, Cons and other Activities

1. Each driver for a field trip or Con must be at least 25 years of age, licensed and covered by car insurance with a copy of the driver's license and the car insurance "wallet card" on file with the RE office to transport children or youth on a AUUC-sponsored field trip, Con or other activity.
2. Young children must use an approved child safety seat in accordance with state law. Older children must use a seatbelt when riding in cars. Children may not ride in the cargo area of trucks or other vehicles.

3. Youth may drive themselves and their siblings to events only with the approval of their parents/guardians. Youth are expected to ask their parent's permission prior to driving themselves or siblings to an AUUC event and must follow all Virginia state driving laws.
4. It is preferred to have two adults in a car with youth when possible.

Confidential Screening and Criminal Background Investigations

All volunteers shall authorize AUUC to conduct a search of the Virginia State Police Sexual Offender Registry and a criminal background-investigation prior to working in the AUUC RE Program. This is not an employment application form.

The criminal-background investigation

By signing, you consent to AUUC conducting a sex-offender screening through the Virginia State Police for any period during which you teach, chaperone, supervise, mentor or attend to children in the AUUC RE Program.

By signing, you consent to AUUC permission to conduct a criminal-background investigation and agree with the sections outlined below. Background investigations are conducted every three years for all volunteers with minors.

Criminal-Background Investigation:

Sec. I. I understand that an investigative report may be generated on me that may include information on my character; criminal-history records from any criminal-justice agency in any federal, state, city and county jurisdictions; state Department of Motor Vehicle/Drivers' License Records, including traffic citations and registration; and Sex Offender and Crimes against Minors Registry. I understand that AUUC may request information from public and private sources about any of the above information, and I consent for AUUC to do so.

Sec. II. I am entitled by law to know if the position for which I am applying is denied because of information obtained from this background investigation and AUUC shall inform me if that happens.

Sec. III. I agree that a photocopy or telephonic facsimile of this authorization shall be as valid as the original. I understand that this release is valid for most federal, state and county agencies.

Sec. IV. I agree that this authorization is good for any period during which I teach, supervise, chaperone or attend to children for the Religious Education program at AUUC (whether volunteer or paid).

Sec. V. I authorize, without reservation, anyone contacted by AUUC to furnish the information described in Section I.

By signing and returning the next page of this document, I agree that:

- I will comply with the AUUC RE Safety Policies and Agreements;
- I authorize AUUC to conduct a sex-offender registry screening and a criminal-background investigation;
- My application to volunteer in RE depends on the results of these investigation(s);
- Knowledge from other sources that is revealed during my tenure or application may affect my participation in the RE Program at AUUC;
- AUUC will consider the nature of any offense, relation to the position for which I am applying, time since conviction and all other relevant facts and circumstances in determining whether to accept my application or terminate my volunteer position.

Authorization for AUUC to Conduct Confidential Screening and Criminal Background Investigations

Print Full Name (include middle name): _____

Other names you have used: _____

Email Address: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Mobile: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Your Social Security Number confirms your identity for purposes of completing a background investigation. RE staff will safeguard and use this information for the purpose of screening/background checks only.

Date of Birth: _____

Your date of birth is required in order to confirm your identity for purposes of completing a background investigation.

If you answer "Yes" to any of the following questions, please include the city/state/county and the year the crime occurred for each conviction. Attach additional paper if needed.

1. Do you have any criminal convictions? No Yes

2. If yes, do you have any convictions for sexual abuse, molestation or crimes involving children? No Yes

3. Have you ever been convicted of, or pleaded guilty or "no contest" to a crime? No Yes

4. Do you currently have a pending arrest awaiting trial? No Yes

I have read and promise to comply with AUUC RE Safety Policies and I authorize AUUC to conduct the appropriate screenings/background checks as detailed in this document as appropriate during my tenure. If my status changes and changes my answers to any of the above questions, I will report this to the DRE before continuing to volunteer in the RE program. All information above is true to the best of my knowledge.

Signature*: _____ Date: _____

*Parent/Guardian must also sign for minors (under 18):