

- Adults should not help children with toileting. For younger children who cannot manage alone, permission should be given by the parent or guardian before toileting or changing help is given.
- Any physical contact between adults and children should occur in “public” and be sanctioned by the program supervisor and the parent/guardian. For example hugs and kisses for younger children or physical ‘rough housing’ with older kids.
- Children should not be taken in an adult’s vehicle without parent/guardian permission and the knowledge of leaders.
- Parents of children enrolled in programs should be encouraged to ask questions and stay abreast of the nature of the adult/child interactions. Where they feel comfortable they should be encouraged to talk with their children about the programs and the volunteers and staff they encounter.

IF YOU SUSPECT THAT A CHILD IS BEING ABUSED . . .

It is now Ontario Law that each person is to report any suspected child abuse to their local Children’s Aid Society.

Children’s Aid Society of the Region of Peel

(905) 363-6131 (staffed 24 hours)

If a child reports abuse to you at any point, do not attempt to further interview the child. Let the child speak about what is happening to him or her, and affirm to the child how difficult it must be to be in that situation. Do not ask the child leading questions about what is happening to him or her. Leave that to professionals who have been specially trained to deal with this sensitive issue. Do not frighten the child further by talking about reporting the abuse. In many cases, children who are being abused have been told by their abusers that very bad things will happen if they tell anyone.

Immediately report the alleged abuse to the Minister or DLL and the Children’s Aid Society.

Unitarian Congregation in Mississauga
84 South Service Road
Mississauga, Ontario L5G 2R9
www.uucm.ca

Safe Steps

Safe Congregation Policy

Toward an Ethic of Right Relations

Amended May 8, 2013

Philosophy Statement

We, the members of the Unitarian Congregation in Mississauga (UCM), are aware of the prevalence of sexual abuse, interpersonal violence and harassment in our society. We, as a congregation, choose to address these issues, and to do everything in our power to prevent such incidents from occurring in our midst.

As Unitarian Universalists, we are committed to the inherent worth and dignity of every person and to justice and compassion between and among individuals and groups. We recognize that both laity and clergy need to accept active responsibility for the prevention of interpersonal violence and abuse within our congregations, and for healing where such violence or abuse has occurred, thereby restoring community. We recognize the moral complexity involved with the issues of justice, right relationships, power, and trust. Therefore, we will act to create safe environments that protect children and adults from harm as we promote spiritual growth.

We believe the Unitarian Congregation in Mississauga is uniquely positioned to respond to this challenge. UCM is a special place that highly values the search for truth in community. It is a place that encourages personal growth, allows for personal truths, and supports individuals and families in their efforts to build better lives and a better society. As a caring community, we can respond to those in need in broad, flexible ways.

Affirmation of Responsibility and Commitment

We affirm our commitment to maintain an environment free of sexual abuse, interpersonal violence, and harassment. This is in keeping with our commitment to maintain an environment free of discrimination and harassment based on colour, ethnicity, religion, national origin, age,

disability, gender or sexual orientation. We pledge to conduct ourselves in a manner that conveys mutual respect and consideration.

Definitions

Duty of care: The moral, legal, ethical and spiritual obligation that one person owes the other, especially the obligations to take reasonable measures to care for and protect the interests of the other. The obligation includes protection from harm such as sexual harassment, exploitation and assault.

Sexual abuse or sexual molestation refers to sexual involvement or sexual contact with a person who is a minor or who is legally incompetent or that is non-consensual. The broad definition of Child Abuse includes physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect.

Neglect is the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, supervision and medical treatment.

Sexual harassment refers to undesired or inappropriate sexually oriented humour or language; inappropriate questions or comments about sexual behaviour or preference; undesired physical contact; comments which result in the objectification of an individual; conduct or communication which has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. It occurs whenever a person with power treats another person with less power as an object to be used for personal sexual gratification.

Interpersonal violence, like domestic violence, is a pattern of controlling and coercive behaviour that can include physical, sexual, economic, emotional, and psychological abuse of another to establish and maintain power and control. It may include harassment, isolation, overprotectiveness, threats, intimidation, bullying, hitting, kicking, destruction of personal property and abuse of animals.

Preventing Interpersonal Violence, Sexual Misconduct, and Abuse

We acknowledge that preventing future interpersonal violence, sexual abuse, and harassment within our congregation and in society is a complex goal. In exploring this issue, we have learned that preventive education, careful hiring and volunteer recruitment procedures, and policies regarding the circumstances of youth/adult interactions are concrete steps toward creating a safe environment for all concerned.

three years, Performance Evaluation, Supervision, read Safe Steps Policy Manual and sign Affirmation of Responsibility and Commitment, Orientation Level 1, Training Level 2.

Minister

Employment Application, References, Screening Interview, Police Check every three years, Performance Evaluation, Supervision, read Safe Steps Policy Manual and sign Affirmation of Responsibility and Commitment, Orientation Level 1, Training Level 2.

Youth Advisors

Employment Application, References, Screening Interview, Police Check every three years, Performance Evaluation, Supervision, read Safe Steps Policy Manual and sign Affirmation of Responsibility and Commitment, Orientation Level 1, Training Level 2.

OWL Teachers

Profile Questionnaire, Orientation Level 1, Training Level 2, sign Affirmation of Responsibility and Commitment, CUC OWL Training, Police Check every three years.

GUIDELINES WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN

The following guidelines are intended to provide a general overview of how adult-child interactions should occur. It is recognized that unforeseen circumstances can and will occur. The most important safeguard for our children is full disclosure. If an adult finds him or herself alone with a child for any significant amount of time, or in a situation of emotional intensity, every effort should be made to find another adult or at least inform the child's parent or guardian as quickly as possible under the circumstances.

- Adults (age 16+) should not spend extended time alone with children without the consent of the child's guardian and the knowledge of the program supervisor (ministry leader, religious instruction coordinator, trustee etc.)
- Adults who form a relationship with children through our faith community's activities should not seek out opportunities to spend with the child "off site". If off site interactions occur the appropriate people should be informed (as above).
- Every effort must be made to protect the child's privacy. Girls and boys should not change together and adults must change separately. Adults should not sleep in proximity to children.

SCREENING LEVELS

LOW RISK

POSITION / REQUIREMENTS

Spiritual Exploration teachers except OWL Teachers (children and adult)
“Profile” Questionnaire, Orientation Level 1, Training Level 2.

Administrator

Employment Application, References, Screening Interview, Performance Evaluation, Supervision, read Safe Steps Policy Manual and sign Affirmation of Responsibility and Commitment. Orientation and training offered but not required.

Caretaker

Employment Application, References, Screening Interview, Performance Evaluation, Supervision, read Safe Steps Policy Manual and sign Affirmation of Responsibility and Commitment. Orientation and training offered but not required.

Contractors/Rental Supervisors

Read Safe Steps Policy Manual and sign Affirmation of Responsibility and Commitment. Orientation and training offered but not required.

MEDIUM RISK

POSITION / REQUIREMENTS

Lay Chaplains
Orientation Level 1.

Music Director

Application, References, Interview, Service Contract, read Safe Steps Policy Manual and sign Affirmation of Responsibility and Commitment, Orientation Level 1.

HIGH RISK

POSITION / REQUIREMENTS

Caring Circle
Profile Questionnaire, Supervision Policy, read Safe Steps Policy Manual and sign Affirmation of Responsibility and Commitment, Orientation Level 1, Training Level 2.

Director of Lifespan Learning

Employment Application, References, Screening Interview, Police Check every

Education and Training

Information, knowledge, and understanding support the development of healthier relationships based on self-esteem and respect for others. Greater understanding of the complexities of sexuality and abuse will make us better able to avoid situations that could lead to abuse.

Inasmuch as it is the intention of our spiritual exploration programs to promote self-esteem and personal responsibility among our children and our adult membership, the minister and /or delegate will provide the following:

1. Orientation for spiritual exploration teachers and youth leaders, which will include a detailed discussion of the “Guidelines for Working with Children” and of ways to create safe spaces for both youth and leaders.
2. Orientation for facilitators and teachers of adult courses, workshops, and groups.
3. Information for all members and friends of the congregation regarding resources within the community that address the issues of domestic violence and sexual abuse.
4. Regular reminders, in the newsletter and orders of service and through sermons and events that sexual abuse, harassment, and interpersonal violence are issues for us all. Examples that will go into the Newsletter twice a year are: Distress Line Peel, Interim Place, (Women’s Shelter), Peel Children’s Aid, Kids Helpline, Victim Services, Elder Abuse, Peel Senior Link, Women Abuse Awareness Month. This is the joint responsibility of the Minister and DLL

Procedures for Recruiting Volunteers* and Hiring Staff

** Volunteers in this document (e.g., teachers, drivers, caring circle)*

Religious communities are particularly at risk for sexual misconduct because they make such valiant efforts to welcome everyone and automatically assume a level of trust. Since incidents of sexual abuse often take place in the context of an ongoing relationship, it is essential that recruitment and hiring procedures be established that protect children, youth, and adults in our programs, guard staff and volunteers from false accusations, and shield UCM from liability.

We feel a legal and moral responsibility to approach these concerns directly. The following procedures, which will include appropriate screening, will be used by committees and individuals responsible for hiring employees and for recruiting volunteers.

1. Child physical and sexual abuse are criminal actions which will not be tolerated in our congregation.
2. No individual who has been previously convicted or adjudicated of child or sexual abuse will work with children or youth.
3. Adults working with children or youth shall attend an orientation on our Safe Steps policies and procedures. Included in the training will be discussion of standards for appropriate interpersonal behaviour.
4. Adults identified in the "Screening Levels" matrix must complete the appropriate applications and sign the appropriate documents. (see appendix page 6)
5. All employees and some volunteers will be interviewed by appropriate congregation representatives (i.e., Director of Lifespan Learning, Minister, member of the Board, Spiritual Exploration Committee, Adult Education Committee, Membership Committee).
6. The Minister, the Director of Lifespan Learning (DLL) and Youth Advisor(s) and "OWL" (Our Whole Lives) teachers will be asked to provide a criminal record check. A record will be kept of the results of such a check as well as of any references that have been requested. Police checks will be submitted every three years for the duration of the tenure of the person.
7. All children attending spiritual exploration programming will complete registration forms designating their caretaker, address, telephone number, emergency contact number, and any special considerations.
8. There will be one adult present for every 5 children and every 7 youth at all congregationally sponsored functions, with the exception of spiritual exploration classes. There will always be a minimum of 2 adults present at all congregationally sponsored functions that happen outside Sunday morning education classes.

9. Any adults working with children or youth must have regularly attended UCM for a minimum of six months.
10. Employees and volunteers are asked to produce a valid driver's license and automobile insurance (minimum amount \$1,000,000) if they are to be transporting children and youth. In addition all passengers must be accommodated in accordance with government regulations. (See Field Trip Policy for requirements for transporting children.)
11. Adult survivors of child abuse who are considering working with children or youth may want to meet with the minister to discuss challenges that may be present.
12. In order to provide a heightened vigilance to the potential of abuse when unrelated children or vulnerable adults are involved, **groups should consist of at least three individuals.**
13. Ontario law requires that any adult with a suspicion that a child under the age of 16 may have been abused is required to report the suspicion to the local Children's Aid Society.

Employees of the Congregation

Every person seeking a staff or contract position at UCM will complete an application for employment and receive a copy of the Safe Steps policies. Those candidates selected for interviews for positions at UCM will be screened by the appropriate hiring committee who will contact references and record the contact. The application form will be considered confidential. They will be kept in a locked file in the office, to be viewed only by the appropriate hiring committee or members of the Personnel Committee for those individuals who are employed by UCM.

Upon hire, employees will also be asked to sign the "Affirmation of Responsibility and Commitment" statement, indicating that they have read and understand the Safe Steps policies.

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Affirmation of Responsibility and Commitment

I have read and understand the Safe Steps Policies and agree to adhere to its philosophies and expectations.

I affirm my commitment to maintain an environment free of sexual abuse, interpersonal violence, and harassment. This is in keeping with the Unitarian Congregation in Mississauga's commitment to maintain an environment free of discrimination and harassment based on colour, ethnicity, religion, national origin, age, disability, gender or sexual orientation. I pledge to conduct myself in a manner that conveys mutual respect and consideration.

I also pledge to do my best to protect and support those who come to me either at risk or in crisis. I accept the responsibility to educate myself about sexual misconduct, abuse, molestation, exploitation, and harassment.

Signature

Date

Affirmation of Responsibility and Commitment

I have read and understand the Safe Steps Policies and agree to adhere to its philosophies and expectations.

I affirm my commitment to maintain an environment free of sexual abuse, interpersonal violence, and harassment. This is in keeping with the Unitarian Congregation in Mississauga's commitment to maintain an environment free of discrimination and harassment based on colour, ethnicity, religion, national origin, age, disability, gender or sexual orientation. I pledge to conduct myself in a manner that conveys mutual respect and consideration.

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Signature

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Annual Offence Declaration

In order to complete your Annual Offence Declaration, please complete the section below:

I DECLARE, since the last criminal record check collected by UCM, or since the last Offence Declaration given by me to UCM, that:

- I have no convictions under the Criminal Code of Canada up to and including the date of this declaration for which a pardon has not been issued or granted under the Criminal Records Act (Canada).

OR

- I have been convicted of criminal offences under the Criminal Code of Canada for which a pardon under Section 4.1 of the Criminal Records Act (Canada) has not been issued or granted to me.

Name (please print)

Signature

Date

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