

Childcare Safety Policy

Parents and/or guardians are responsible for their dependent children and/or youth and are required to ensure those dependents follow all applicable policies and procedures herein. All adults whether compensated or volunteer, who work with children and youth at Auburn Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (hereinafter “AUUF”) events, whether on site or off, have responsibilities to the children and youth, parents and guardians, and to the congregation.

Adults working with children and youth must participate in orientation and training as needed that will include an explanation of the limits of confidentiality and rules for reporting suspected abuse and/or dangers to self and others to authorities. All adults working with children and youth are expected to act in accordance with mandatory reporting laws of Alabama. Paid staff and adult volunteers are mandatory reporters. Beyond legal mandates, AUUF feels a moral mandate to report. Adults will explain, in age-appropriate language, the limits of confidentiality to children and youth in their care.

In addition to these policies, adult supervisors, children, and youth will abide by all other relevant AUUF policies while at AUUF events or meetings.

1) SCREENING AND SELECTION OF WORKERS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Adults working with children or youth must meet the following criteria:

- a) All adult volunteers must have been active and in good standing with the AUUF congregation for at least 6 months.
- b) All adults working with High School aged youth (14-18) must be at least 25 years old
- c) All adults working with Middle School aged children (11-13) must be at least 21 years old
- d) All other grade-level teachers, nursery workers and other childcare workers must be at least 19 years old.
- e) Adults working with children must have a criminal background check every three years.
 - i) Adults with any of the following convictions will be disqualified from working with the children or youth: neglect or abandonment, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, abduction, child pornography, sexual exploitation, statutory rape, assault, violent crimes, sales to minors, aggravated assault, robbery and/or murder.
 - ii) In cases not covered under i) above, the RE Committee, with input from the Minister and the head of the RE program, can determine the suitability of a person to work with children and youth.

2) SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- a) Aside from field trips, an adult designated as guardian must be always on the premises while children are in RE or on the playground. Parents are responsible for

finding a guardian for their children if they are not on-site. The playground staff, teachers and/or DRE will release child to designated guardian.

b) A parent or guardian must sign a registration form containing authorization for a supervising adult to seek emergency medical treatment for children when deemed necessary.

c) In temporary cases the rule of three will be practiced during all programs with children, when situations arise that prevent the two adult rule from being practiced.

i) At no time will one adult and one child/youth be alone together out of sight of others unless the adult is a parent or legal guardian of the child/youth (Rule of 3).

ii) Two adults who are in a committed partnership or marriage cannot satisfy the requirement of having at least two adults present around youth.

iii) The 2-adult rule always applies when diapering children and during bathroom trips; in addition, the door to the bathroom will be left slightly ajar when an adult is assisting a child in the bathroom.

d) For groups involving children ages 0-13 the adult to child ratio must be a minimum of 2:6.

e) For groups involving youth ages 14-18 the adult to youth ratio must be a minimum of 2:8.

3) BEHAVIOR

a) Corporal punishment will not be used under any circumstances.

b) Fear-inducing and emotionally coercive adult behaviors (such as withholding positive elements as a punishment for unwanted behavior) will not be used under any circumstances.

c) No explicitly sexual behavior or provocative behavior or language by adult supervisors, children, or youth will be tolerated.

d) No feigned weapons, violence, or threats of violence will be tolerated.

e) Adults, children, and youth may not be in possession of any of the following items: firearms, feigned weapons of any kind, explosives, knives with blades longer than two inches and knives which do not fold into themselves, other weapons (functional or feigned) of any kind, illegal drugs, alcohol, or pornography.

f) Erotic or offensive (as determined by the adult in charge) text or images on clothing or other materials will not be allowed.

g) Shoes must be worn on the playground at all times.

h) AUUF will implement the Our Whole Lives sexuality education curriculum for as many age levels as possible, in order to give children and youth life skills and language to avoid, confront, and/or report inappropriate behavior.

Due to the inherent power imbalance between adults and children/youth, adults will assume the primary responsibility for setting and maintaining boundaries and cultivating an atmosphere of health and trust.

Adults who look primarily to children/youth for friendship will not be considered for a position of responsibility. Adults should not depend on children and/or youth as peers for friendship or support.

Care must be taken to discourage the reality or appearance of an inappropriate relationship. If any significant contact occurs outside regularly scheduled events or meetings, due diligence must be exercised to notify appropriate adults (parent/guardian, church official-DRE, minister, and/or president). Sometimes a genuine mentoring relationship will develop between a youth and an adult. Such relationships can be healthy and transformative for both. It is in the best interest of both the adult and the youth that the parents as well as the congregation leaders be aware of these outside activities and relationship.

Adults and youth shall report to the adults in charge of events or meetings any signs of:

- • Physical, sexual or emotional abuse (based on observation or disclosure by the youth or child)
- • Threatened or attempted suicide
- • Self-destructive behavior (e.g. cutting, drug abuse, eating disorders)
- All adults are expected to act in accordance with mandatory reporting laws of Alabama. If the responsible adults in charge ascertain that a child or youth is at immediate risk, the responsible adults shall take any necessary steps to protect the minor. The responsible adult shall follow procedures to contact congregation leaders, the parent(s) of the involved minor, and the authorities, as warranted. Otherwise, the matter is to remain confidential. Release of information could interfere with successful prosecution or could result in unwarranted damage to the reputation of the accused.

If child abuse is suspected, the adult who has been suspected of unwarranted conduct will be immediately relieved of any duties involving the supervision, care, or teaching of children and youth.

Consequences for Behaviors

Adults, children and youth will abide by AUUF policies while at AUUF events or meetings. If any policies are broken then one or more of the following approaches will be taken:

- * There will be a conversation about the issue and efforts made to rectify if possible

- * The minister, DRE, and parents will be brought in to discuss the issue
- * The child or adult will be asked to leave
- * Any legal issues will follow the natural course of action

Parents and/or guardians are responsible for their dependent children and/or youth and are required to ensure those dependents are in compliance with all policies and procedures herein.

Violation of the Law by an Adult

In the event that an adult at an AUUF meeting or event has violated the law:

- • The police will be contacted immediately.
- • Arrangements will be made to replace the adult.
- • Steps to follow Mandatory Reporting will be followed including AUUF chain of reporting (minister, DRE, president, parents/guardians)
- • Further consequences will be decided by the minister, DRE, president and/or Board

Violation of the Law by a Child or Youth

In the event that adults in charge determine a law has been broken by a child or youth.

- • The child or youth's parents/guardians will be called in immediately
- • The minister and DRE will be contacted. It is encouraged that pastoral care be provided to this child or youth and that they not be shut out.
- • Arrangements will be made to get the child or youth home when applicable (during an event away from AUUF and/or parents).
- • The child or youth should be offered the opportunity to apologize to the community or offended individual in person or writing. Further, the child or youth should be offered the opportunity to perform some act of reparation.
- • The community will be informed of the process and results.
- * The police will be contacted if the situation requires it.

4) FOOD, BEVERAGE, AND MEDICAL CARE

- a) Peanut butter, Nutella, nut-containing food bars, and any other products that have nuts or peanuts listed in the ingredients will not be brought into areas where children are or will be. (Even trace amounts can be deadly.)
- b) All children and youth with life-threatening allergies must have a parent or legal guardian file an Allergy Action Plan; this restriction must be clearly posted where food will be served or prepared.
- c) All children and youth with less severe food allergies, sensitivities, and prohibitions must have a parent or legal guardian indicate the restriction on registration form or permission slip; this restriction must be clearly posted where food will be served or prepared.
- d) Aside from an emergency (anaphylaxis, etc.), no childcare supervisor (paid or volunteer) shall administer medication.
- e) Childcare supervisors will wear gloves when supplying first aid (e.g., bandages) when possible (aside from imminent danger, excessive bleeding, etc.).

5) TRANSPORTATION OF CHILDREN OR YOUTH

- a) Written permission, submitted as hard copy or digital, including a signature of the parent/guardian of all minor passengers will be obtained prior to event.
- b) Permission slips will convey full itinerary, all event activities, locations, and contact information. Unplanned stops will include communication with families before/ during the stop.
- c) Permission slips will convey the names and contact information of all adult supervisors and adult participants.
- d) Adult supervisors will have in their possession signed medical release forms (found on the permission slip) for all children and/or youth with whom they are traveling.
- e) Adult Supervisors will be responsible for obtaining appropriate medical care for any child and/or youth in their custody.
- f) At no time will child or youth participants leave the activity/event.
- g) Adults driving children and/or youth to and from activities/events must be at least 25 years old and possess current license to operate the vehicle to be driven and proof of insurance.
- h) The rule of three applies to trips taken in vehicles. The only exception is if the driver is parent to all minor occupants.
- i) Licensed drivers under 19 years of age are allowed only to drive themselves and family to and from events.
- j) In every vehicle in which seat belts are required by law, vehicle occupancy will not exceed the number of seat belts, and all occupants will be properly secured in the seat belts or car seats according to Alabama law.
- k) No driver may consume alcohol or use any form of drug that can affect physical or mental performance while carrying out their duty as a driver. Adults who have a DUI on their driving record within 10 years of the request to drive children or youth will be disqualified from driving.

6) NOTIFICATION

This process applies to emergencies and nonemergency incidents alike. If it is not possible to meet all requirements (i.e. if a supervising adult is incapacitated), best judgment should prevail.

- a) Attend to emergency care: call 911 and administer first aid.
- b) In the absence of a parent, a supervisor must accompany the child to medical facility if transported.
- c) Assure the safety and well-being of all other children or youth.
- d) Notify parent/s of children or youth most directly involved.
- e) Notify DRE/Minister/Board President
- f) Notify remaining parents.

7) LEGAL ENFORCEMENT

This process applies to emergencies and nonemergency incidents alike. If it is not possible to meet all requirements (i.e. if a supervising adult is incapacitated), best judgment should prevail.

If an adult, child, or youth has violated the law during an AUUF event:

- a) The police will be contacted immediately.
- b) Arrangements will be made to replace the adult to meet the 2-adult minimum, in the meantime the Rule of Three is in effect.
- c) Steps to follow Mandatory Reporting will be followed
- d) Notifications will be made according to section 6 of this policy, above.
- e) Further action will be decided by DRE/Minister/Board President

8) OVERNIGHT EVENTS

Event sleeping arrangements must adhere to the following:

- a) One person under a blanket/sleeping bag
- b) All sleeping areas must be open and monitored by at least two awake adults at all times
- c) All doors must remain unlocked, and there must be enough light in all rooms for roamers to identify the people in the rooms.

9) COMMUNICATION

Recognizing that the means of communication, especially electronic communication, are changing rapidly. AUUF upholds the principle that parents are the final arbiters of how and when their child and youth should receive communications from adults. When they request, parents or guardians should be included in communications between leader/advisor/mentor and child or youth.

Adults will not initiate Instant Message with a child or youth unless the following conditions has been met:

- * All other forms of communication have failed

Furthermore,

- *.The IM is sent only to direct the child or youth to another form of communication for the purpose of conducting the business of the group.
- * Communication through texting, email and other forms that can be documented are best practice.

Adults responding to communication from a child or youth will maintain appropriate boundaries and use discernment, always acting in the best interest of the safety and emotional/spiritual well being of the child or youth.

10) MEDIA

Only the minister (or the President of the Board of Trustees, in the absence of a minister) will speak for AUUF to media on matters of child/youth safety.