

# UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF GERMANTOWN

## QUICK GUIDE TO SAFE CONGREGATION POLICY

*Approved by the Ministry Executive Team, the Governance & Ministry Task Force, and Church Counsel, August 2017 and revised September 26, 2017 and June 12, 2018.*

This Quick Guide is intended to provide a summary list of the provisions of the Safe Congregation Policy approved by the Board of Trustees on July 25, 2017, in order to make it easier to locate the full provision in the policy. If there is any difference between this Quick Guide and the policy, the policy governs.

### **A. Requirements for those who provide Religious Education**

1. Must be a member **or** a friend of USG for 6 months **OR** must be a member in good standing at a UU church for one year.
2. Must be at least 18.
3. Exceptions to the above can be made by the Ministry Executive Team (MET) which is responsible for implementing the Policy.
4. Must not have any history of abuse, violent crime conviction, or sexual misconduct adjudication.
5. Must consent to criminal conviction and child abuse screening if age 18 or over.
6. Religious Professionals must complete job application and criminal, child abuse and fingerprint screening and other state law requirements.

### **B. Requirements for Safe Environment**

1. All Workers (paid or unpaid who provide direct care or supervise USG children and youth) are subject to the supervision of and evaluation by the Minister.
2. Classrooms must be open to parents and visible.
3. Each RE group will have a minimum of 2 Workers (at least one adult).
4. For infants and toddlers, preferred ratio is one Worker for 4 children.
5. When a scheduled RE activity takes place, the Director of Spiritual Development (DSD) will be responsible to inform parents of the nature of the activity and the location of the children.
6. When car-pooling, drivers must be a minimum of 25 years of age (insured).
7. There should be 2 adults for every vehicle transporting children and no Worker should be alone with another child who is not related to the driver.
8. Children in 2d grade or younger may only be released from class to a parent or guardian. If children in 3d grade are grouped with children in 2d grade or younger, this requirement applies to them as well.

### **C. Requirements for Proper Conduct**

1. Appropriate boundaries must be maintained between Workers and children.
2. Romantic relationships are prohibited.
3. There should be limitations on physical contact.
4. Private conversations should take place in a public place.
5. RE professionals may meet with children in separate rooms for pastoral care, provided the door remains open for the safety of the professional and the child.
6. Corporal punishment and abusive language is prohibited.
7. Workers should not have informal contact with children unless the parents have provided their advance consent.
8. Tobacco use, illegal drug use, and alcohol use are prohibited.
9. When e-mails are sent to youth under 9<sup>th</sup> grade, the parent should also be provided with the message. The DSD must be a member of any closed social media groups.

#### **D. Requirements for Education**

1. MET will prepare a Safe Congregation Handbook.
2. Handbook will be provided to all Workers and parents of RE children.
3. Annual training for Workers and RE Professionals.
4. DSD is responsible for maintaining forms, consents, screening records, etc.

#### **E. Mandatory Child Abuse Reporting**

1. All “mandated reporters” (Workers, RE Professionals and Staff) are required by PA state law to make a prompt report if there is a reasonable suspicion of child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional) or neglect of a child (withholding of necessities) to CHILDLINE. The report can be by telephone (800-932-0313) or via the website ([www.compass.stat.pa.us](http://www.compass.stat.pa.us)).
2. Workers must also notify the person in charge at USG-the Safe Congregational Ministry Team-e.g. the Minister, DSD, Members of the Committee on Ministry or the Board President.
3. The Team will notify other appropriate USG representatives.
4. The RE Professional on the Team will notify the parents of any child who may be the victim of abuse. The Team will investigate the details of the incident that resulted in a ChildLine report.
5. The Team will communicate with law enforcement representatives, if required.
6. The Team will exercise due diligence during the investigation: e.g. checking sex offender registries, checking criminal records, interviewing witnesses.
7. The Team will prepare a written report of its findings.
8. The Team will attempt to interview the alleged offender and provide that person with the opportunity to make a statement.
9. The Team will develop a Plan of Action.
10. If an RE Professional is the possible offender, the UUA shall be notified.