

# RE Safety

## Board Policy on Religious Exploration Safety

Approved by the UUCWI Board of Trustees February 14, 2012

### Background:

This document is for the purpose of outlining and describing the methods by which the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Whidbey Island (UUCWI) will ensure safety for the students in the Religious Exploration (RE) program.

This document is meant to guide and suggest methods of ensuring that all students who attend any RE session will do so in a healthy and nurturing environment that is threat-free, and holds to the values of the Unitarian Universalist Principles.

### Policy:

Our policy is to do background checks on anyone working with children.

For the intent of this policy, the definition and reporting of suspected child abuse shall be per Washington State Law, as defined in RCW 26.44.020.

1. All RE personnel, whether paid staff or volunteers, shall adhere to the Code of Professional Practices as described in the Handbook for Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA). *Reference: Attachment A.*
2. All RE personnel, whether paid staff or volunteers, shall be required to pass the Washington State Patrol background check for Child/ Adult Abuse per Information Act RCW 43.43.830-845.
  - a. The Director of Religious Exploration (DRE) shall conduct the background check.
  - b. A more comprehensive background check may be requested at the sole discretion of the UUCWI Board, RE Committee, or DRE.
3. Reporting of suspected child abuse will be the responsibility of the minister, congregation chaplain, or DRE, as defined RCW 26.44.020.
  - a. The UUCWI Board President will be informed of suspected child abuse.
4. All parents/ guardians will be required to fill out medical information/ consent forms as deemed appropriate.
5. All parents/ guardians will be required to fill out consent forms for any activity that would remove the students from UUCWI property, such as field trips.
  - a. No student may be included in any activity outside of the UUCWI property unless the appropriate consent form has been signed.
  - b. Verbal consent will not be accepted.

6. Parent/ guardians will be asked to report to the DRE if their child/ children have any special conditions that might pose a risk to themselves or others (such as allergies, infectious diseases or behavioral conditions.) In addition, any special needs of the student will be reported to the DRE so that the RE program can strive to meet the student's needs.
  7. Safety issues such as fire, earthquake or any unforeseen emergency guidelines will be age-appropriately discussed with the RE students and will include 2 safety drills per year. This will serve to reinforce not only what is learned in school or at home, but ensure that the students know how best to act safely if the situation arises while in class.
    - a. A First Aid Kit will be onsite
    - b. The DRE will hold a valid First Aid and CPR endorsement.
  8. All accidents or safety issues involving a student during a RE class will be documented on an Accident Report Form and reported to the parents/ guardians of the student.
  9. Serious instances of inappropriate behavior towards other students or RE staff of any student attending RE will be documented and reported to the parents/ guardians of the student for resolution. If the DRE and parents cannot resolve the issue, then, after discussion with the RE Committee, repeated behavioral problems will result in the documented behavior being reported to the UUCWI Board for actions under the Disruptive Behavior Policy.
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## **Attachment A: LREDA Code of Professional Practices**

*Reference: <http://www25.uua.org/lreda/content/code.html>*

### **Preamble**

**We, the members of the Liberal Religious Educators Association, do affirm this Code of Professional Practices as our standard of commitment to the practice of religious education. This Code will be followed by all LREDA members who are or have been engaged as professional religious educators. It is supported by all who, by joining LREDA, indicate that they honor the importance of religious growth and learning in the congregations or communities they serve.**

### **I. Self**

As a professional religious educator, or as a supporter of religious education within the Unitarian Universalist Association or the Canadian Unitarian Council, I commit myself to honor the ideals of liberal religious education, and to actively explore and articulate the underlying values and principles that those ideals express.

I recognize that as a religious leader in whom trust and power have been placed, I am called to be faithful both morally and legally to my professional relationships. I must never abuse the authority of my position by manipulating others to satisfy my personal needs. (Examples of such abuse would be sexualized behavior with any child, adolescent, or vulnerable adult seeking advice or comfort; sexualized behavior with any adult who is in another committed relationship; sexualized behavior with interns or youth advisors).

I pledge that I will not engage in any other exploitative relationship that abuses the power and damages the trust that a specific individual, a congregation, or an institution has placed in me. As a religious education professional, I have the responsibility to have read and understood this Code, and to live in accordance with its contents. I expect that my colleagues will do likewise.

I accept the responsibility to confront a colleague's misuse of power or to report concerns about suspected misconduct to a LREDA Good Officer. Furthermore, I will be aware of and observe the legal requirements of my State or Province regarding reporting of physical or sexual misconduct.

The recognition of the importance of religious education by my congregation or employer requires acknowledgment of my worth as a professional religious educator. Understanding that other religious educational professionals will follow after me, I will work with the appropriately designated group within my congregation or place of employment to help establish up-to-date standards of fair compensation and working conditions that support professional religious education.

Because the role and the demands on the religious educator require continual updating of professional perspectives, I will seek and maintain outside collegial contacts and continuing education opportunities to provide such professional growth.

As an individual who brings a complex variety of needs and boundaries to my professional life, I commit to seek any needed personal assistance and counseling from a professional outside of my congregation. Since the demands of others upon me will be many and constant, I will try to keep especially aware of my rights and limits, and if I am not single, of the rights and limits of my family, and of my relation to them as a spouse, partner, parent, or friend.

## **II. Colleagues**

I will stand in a supportive relation to my ministerial, religious education and staff colleagues and keep for them an open mind and heart.

I will strictly respect confidences given me by colleagues and expect them to keep mine.

I will not speak scornfully or in derogation of any colleague in public. In any private conversation critical of a colleague, I will speak responsibly and temperately.

Should I know that a LREDA colleague is engaged in practices that are damaging, as defined in our Code of Professional Practice, I will speak openly and frankly to him/her and endeavor to be of help. If necessary, I will bring such matters to the attention of the LREDA Board of Trustees.

Since I share the welfare of the congregation or community I serve with the parish minister and/or other staff, I will seek to be part of mutually cooperative and consultative relationships with them as we carry out our shared and separate responsibilities. When difficulties arise, I will seek help judiciously and express my concerns professionally, keeping in mind the worth and dignity of all parties involved.

I will share leadership opportunities and responsibilities with my colleagues openly, honestly, and ethically. In particular, I will consult with them in advance of any professional or public engagements that I may be asked to undertake in their communities or congregations.

When leaving a position of religious education leadership for any reason, I will refrain from being involved in the process of selecting my successor. Further, I will support my successor by leaving room for her/him to establish her/his own identity and leadership in the congregation and by refraining from accepting positions on policy-making bodies in the congregation (such as the Board, Religious Education Committee, Finance Committee, or Personnel Committee) for two years after my professional leadership has been concluded in that congregation. For two years, I will not accept or volunteer for roles in the religious education program, and will encourage members of the congregation to speak to the current religious educator or other appropriate persons for answers to all current religious education issues or concerns.

### **III. Congregation**

I will uphold and honor the practice of congregational polity within the congregation I serve, knowing that by educating and modeling the practice of such polity, I am strengthening the experience of free corporate religious life.

I will respect the traditions of the congregation or community I serve and will seek changes that reflect liberal religious principles of inclusivity in consultation with others in that body.

I will honor absolutely the confidences shared with me by members of the congregation or place of employment keeping in mind that such confidentiality should not contribute to personal or professional misuse of power.

In the case of planned or forced resignation or significant change in role or responsibility, I will consult with a LREDA Good Officer for counsel and assistance in executing a well-managed departure or change. I will refrain from actions or public statements that intentionally initiate or foster divisiveness in the congregation.

#### **IV. Movement and Association**

As a LREDA member, I understand my responsibility to educate lay people and ministerial colleagues about the qualifications for and dimensions of religious education leadership, and to enlist their help in according appropriate status to liberal religious educators.

To promote professional integrity and leadership, I will be familiar with and advocate for LREDA's Code of Professional Practices and Guidelines.

I will support and participate in activities and programs of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Canadian Unitarian Council and encourage the participation of others in such events, knowing that wider participation will lead to deeper understanding of our goals as liberal religious educators.

Recognizing the relationship between liberal religious goals and values and adequate financial resources needed to support those goals, I will work to support fair and appropriate funding efforts advocated by the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Canadian Unitarian Council and associated interests and programs of liberal religious educators.

#### **V. Community**

As a professional religious educator, I understand that whenever I participate in the wider community, I represent my particular faith group and should provide a living model of ethical and religious leadership for people of all ages and circumstances.

I will honor our liberal religious imperative to work for social justice. In turn, I will encourage all people within my congregation to participate in community and world issues as the embodiment of living religiously in the liberal tradition.