

# Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno

## Spirit School Handbook

2018-2019



Unitarian Universalist  
Church of Fresno

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Welcome to the Spirit School Co-Operative at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno!

A primary purpose of religion—and religious education—is to nurture all that is right and good in us, to help us to grow into our best selves. Our program is based on the idea that children and youth learn, grow, and flourish in an environment that recognizes and meets different learning styles, individual interests, and developmental stages -- and that this applies to adults as well! Because of this, we offer a variety of experiences for exploring faith and spirituality, including age-specific classroom-based curricula, child-centered, youth-created, and multigenerational worship, opportunities for creative expression and social action, and time for fun and fellowship. The hope is that we are growing Unitarian Universalists!

From infancy through all stages of life, Unitarian Universalist religious education grounds us in our values, bonds us together in community, teaches what our souls need to know, and inspires us to bring more peace, justice, and love into the world. (Excerpted from the Unitarian Universalist pocket guide.)

Here at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno, we believe that nurturing what is right and good happens from birth through our later stages in life. We offer classes for all ages that are thematically focused and sourced in our Unitarian Universalist faith. Religious Education at UUCF relies on the premise that there is no single answer to religious questions -- that there is a free and responsible for truth and meaning based in justice, equity, and compassion in human relations, displaying acceptance and encouragement of one another, and respecting the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part.

We seek not only to educate the child with facts about religion, but also to provide a feeling of fellowship, fun, and community within UUCF; to nurture the individual child's need for and right to quest throughout life for meaningful truths; and to provide a sense of connection to the heart and the entire human community. We do this in keeping in mind the larger UUCF mission, in particular in our program, to grow spiritually.

Our Religious Exploration is additionally influenced by monthly theological themes that are utilized in our worship service, small group ministries, and youth classrooms. There are opportunities to engage the monthly theme at church, home and in our monthly theme sheets.

We believe that children and youth are intelligent, spiritual, and complete human beings. We all learn best in an atmosphere where we feel safe, respected, heard, and cared for. The ways in which our community relates to them are profound lessons. Thank you for joining us in building the beloved community where we all can learn and grow together.

I welcome you into our community of explorers and hope that you enjoy your journey! I am always open to discussion, questions, and concerns.

In faith,

Katie Hymans  
Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration (DLRE)

## Spirit School Logistics

### Youth Registration

Registration provides us with up-to-date and important information about you and/or your children so that we can best serve them in our program. If you are new to the congregation or have not yet formally enrolled your child or children in our program, you may register online. The registration is on our website at <http://uufresno.org/home/youth-registration/>. If you need assistance, please see a Spirit School Team person, who will guide you through the process. Please ensure we have correct information for your family by completing a new registration form each autumn or any time there are changes. Additionally, sixth through twelfth graders need a signed permission slip from a parent or guardian in order to participate in field trips, events off campus, and overnights, as applicable.

### Spirit School Team

The Spirit School Team is comprised of people who are dedicated to the spiritual development of children and youth. The Spirit School team, in collaboration with the DLRE, has several important functions: to create a vision for the program, develop relevant policy, welcome visiting families, approve program curricula, oversee the budget and major expenses, and oversee various program-related activities. The committee is currently co-chaired by Marilyn Baker ([marloubaker@gmail.com](mailto:marloubaker@gmail.com)) and Adriana Ross-Castro ([adrianaross@live.com](mailto:adrianaross@live.com)). Team members include Kariann Davis, Babs Eskin, Sara Kate Regan, Charity Slagter, and Eva Wissner.

### Family Participation

Our program is a cooperative one. The Spirit School Team asks that each family contribute volunteer time to the life of our programs.

This might mean teaching in one of our classes, chaperoning a youth event, participating on the Spirit School Team, organizing a special event, helping with Chalice Camp, bringing food to events, or sharing a special gift or talent with us. There are many opportunities for families to enrich our programs. In November/December, we will be reaching out through a variety of ways to ask for people to coordinate the following events: Youth Talent Show, Valentine's Day Dance, Mystery Pals, All Church Picnic, Teacher Appreciation Luncheon, and End-of-Year Carnival. We will then ask for other non-teaching volunteers to help out with making the events happen. We appreciate your participation in these events, as they enrich and strengthen the life of our congregation. You can sign up to help with these now at [www.tinyurl.com/uucfspiritschool](http://www.tinyurl.com/uucfspiritschool).

The Spirit School Cooperative is funded by the generous financial donations members and friends make during the annual pledge drive. These monies provide for classroom maintenance, utilities, art supplies, snacks, books, the childcare providers' pay, and the salary for the Directors of Lifespan Religious Exploration. To find out how to make a pledge to support the church, feel free to contact the Member Services Coordinator, the Finance Committee, the Facilities and Finance Manager, or the minister.

### Childcare

In an effort to strive to make it possible for all people to participate in Adult Exploration classes and all events of the church, we offer childcare whenever possible. Two paid childcare providers can be made

available for all events, if arranged ahead of time, even if only for one child. Please contact the Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration (DLRE) to make arrangements.

### **Sick Policy**

In the interest of keeping our Spirit School environment as healthy as possible, we ask parents not to bring their children to church if any of the following conditions apply:

- The child currently has -- or has had in the last 24 hours -- a temperature of 100 degrees or higher
- The child has vomited in the past 24 hours
- The child has visible and/or severe flu or cold symptoms
- The child has head lice.

We appreciate your cooperation with this.

## **Sunday Morning Spirit School**

At UUCF, we offer an array of programs for children and youth. Each Sunday morning, nursery care is provided for children from infancy to two years old (except on Sundays when there is an all ages service, in which case those up to four years old may be in the nursery). Throughout the fall, winter, and spring months (middle of September through middle of June), children and youth learn about living as unique individuals within a caring community. The Spirit School program is led by a team of attentive and dedicated adult volunteers (two teachers per classroom). All teachers are asked to attend two teacher trainings each year. Study themes include the Unitarian Universalist Principles, religious holidays, love and relationships, peace, social and environmental justice, and more. In the summer months, we offer a themed exploration with multi-age classrooms. Descriptions of this year's curricula for each class are available from the DLRE.

Preschool and elementary-age children, as well as junior high youth, begin each Sunday morning with their families in the Sanctuary. Classes begin after the Story/Time For All Ages for grades Preschool through eighth grade. Classes for ninth through twelfth grades (YRUU, our youth group) begin right at 10:30, in the youth room (garage of the office building). The Nursery is open starting at 10:15. All classes end at 12:00 (even if the service is done earlier -- grab a cup of coffee and relax!).

In order to affirm and welcome all people in the classroom, we try to provide alternative activities and fidgets for children to utilize during Spirit School time. We believe that, even if they are not engaging directly in the planned activities, they are absorbing the ideas that are being presented and are also able to feel affirmed in their current needs. To the extent that their activities are not distracting the class as a whole, they will be welcomed to take care of themselves as needed in that moment. If there are particular things we can do to best support your child's needs in the classroom, please communicate directly with the DLRE, who will ensure that the teachers are made aware.

### **All Ages Services**

Approximately once a month (not every month), we hold an all ages worship service. All children and youth participate in the service in the sanctuary. There is no Spirit School, though the nursery is still available for those up to four years old. There is not usually a sermon on these Sundays to make it more user-friendly for children, and it is an opportunity for them to experience worship and what it's like to be in the sanctuary on Sunday morning. This helps lay the groundwork for them to understand what it means to 'do' church when they are on their own as young adults. There are activity boxes available in the foyer to give children another way to engage while in the service, as well as tables in the back with activities, books, and spiritual practice tools. We also set up a special section in the front with 'backjack' chairs for them to sit together

on the floor and see the service up close. Please help your child adjust to being there by explaining to them each part of the service and what is happening.

### **Sign-in/Sign-out Policy**

As one enters the campus from the parking lot, there is a welcome table in the breezeway where families sign their children into Spirit School and pick up name tags. Families are asked to list their cell phone number so teachers can contact them in case of a problem. Families will need to sign their children out from their classrooms at 12:00 or when the class is dismissed. For all those younger than junior high age, *children will not be able to leave the classroom until they are signed out by their parents*. Junior high and above are able to sign themselves out. Please return the name tags either to the Religious Exploration table or your child's teacher so they will be here next time you come back. It is a right of passage for the junior and senior high school youth to be able to sign themselves in and out. However, they do need to be registered for the program so that we have contact and emergency information on hand, and we do need them signed in so we can account for who is there each week, both for our tracking purposes and in the event of a fire drill. For the sake of our safety and accountability, please be sure you are actually signing them out from the classroom each week. And please also be sure to pick your children up by noon. The teachers are volunteers and need to be able to go on with their own days, especially if they have children in Spirit School that they need to collect.

The following chart is a breakdown of all classes offered at UUCF on Sunday mornings from September through June:

Age	Name	Curriculum	Room	Location
0-2 years old	Nursery	Play	Nursery	Office building
3-4 years old	Chalice Children	Chalice Children (story and activity-based)	3	Portable buildings
Kindergarten (incl TK) & 1 <sup>st</sup> grade	Spirit Play	Picture Book Unitarian Universalism (exploring UU principles & sources by book)	7	Portable buildings
2 <sup>nd</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	Web Weavers	UU Superheroes (learning UU values through biography)	1/2	Portable buildings
3 <sup>rd</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> grade	Spirit Explorers	Spirit of Adventure (learning about UUism through famous UUs)	OCR (Office Conference Room)	Office building
6 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> grade	JRUU (Junior Religious Unitarian Universalists)	Popcorn Theology (discussing UU-related themes using movie clips)	Co-housing Living Room	Co-housing common house (next door)
9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> grade	YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists)	Spiritual, leadership, and justice explorations. Soul Matters theme-based lessons	Youth Room	Office building garage

## Activities for Children and Youth

### Coin Collection Sunday

This is a “trick-or-treat” event that takes place on the Sunday closest to Halloween. Children are encouraged to wear a tasteful, non-violent costume to church. They “trick-or-treat” with the congregation, who hand out pocket change in lieu of candy. All proceeds directly benefit a local organization.

### M'ella House Blankets

Each winter, church school classes make fleece blankets that are donated to children at M'ella House. Congregants are asked to bring in two yards of fleece which will be made into a blanket during class time.

### Guest At Your Table

A program of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), a social justice arm of the Unitarian Universalist Association, Guest At Your Table is an opportunity for families to engage with a global humanitarian issue and raise funds to support the work that UUSC is doing to combat that issue.

### Youth Talent Show

On a January evening, kids from age three through teens display their talents in a noncompetitive show. The kids have a chance to shine, using talents such as music, dance, photography, martial arts, and recitation.

### Mystery Pals

Children sign up to participate in this program that matches a child/youth with an adult from the church. They write each other notes for a week in mailboxes, revealing their identities at a 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday lunch. This program fosters intergenerational connections.

### Easter Egg Hunt

Each year on Easter Sunday, we host an egg hunt for our children. Older youth enjoy hiding eggs and assisting little ones in finding them, after the all ages service.

### End of the Year Carnival

The end of the year carnival is a final celebration of the church school year. Children enjoy games, a bounce house, crafts, and other carnival activities.

### Chalice Camp

Chalice Camp is a week-long UU day camp for those entering Kindergarten through 12th grade. Those entering K-6<sup>th</sup> are campers, 7-9<sup>th</sup> are Counselors in Training (CIT), and 10-12<sup>th</sup> are Counselors. Fun and friendship are the goals, along with mindfulness and self-expression, as well as leadership development for the Counselors and CITs. UUCF started Chalice Camp in 2004. Amid the water play, storytelling, games, songs, art, science projects, and drama, the kids have learned about healthy living, evolution, racial identity/justice, and a version of the UU Principles that they can understand and practice. It is a great way for children and youth to deepen their understanding of their own Unitarian Universalist identities. Chalice Camp happens during a week in early summer from 8:30 am-5:00 pm each day, on the UUCF campus. In 2018, it will be June 10-14\*. Registration will be available starting in March. \* This date may change. It will be finalized by September 9.

## Our Whole Lives (OWL) Sexuality Education

*Our Whole Lives* is a series of sexuality and relationship education curricula for five age groups: grades K-1, grades 4-5, grades 7-9, grades 10-12, and adults. *Our Whole Lives* helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. It equips participants with accurate, age-appropriate information in six subject areas: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture. Grounded in a holistic view of sexuality, *Our Whole Lives* provides not only facts about anatomy and human development, but helps participants to clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno offers these programs in alternating years. This year, we will be offering the classes for K/1<sup>st</sup> grade and 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade.

### Senior Youth Group 9-12<sup>th</sup> grades

The Senior Youth Group meets every Sunday from 10:30 to noon in the Youth Room, which is a cool, converted garage in the front office building. Our Senior Youth group are always a bright, vocal, and talented group.

The Senior Youth Room is the most casual area of the church property, with comfy couches for all. The discussions are more relaxed than in other classrooms, and check-in (“how was your week?”) at the beginning of the session can be a lengthy and vital conversation. At the beginning of the year, teachers commonly facilitate team-building games and icebreaker exercises. Soon after, the group chooses its curriculum for the year, which is often UUA-based. The youth are encouraged to speak freely, but in a respectful manner, and are always allowed to “Pass”. They engage in spiritual practice and social justice action.

Four or five Sundays every year are focused on crafting the YRUU-led church service. For this special service, the youth present themselves to the rest of the congregation and express their spiritual leanings, knowledge gleaned from classroom experience, and meaningful life experiences and insights. Often, music, skits, and poetry are involved.

All Senior Youth may attend GA (yearly UU General Assembly) with parent and teacher sponsors/chaperones. There are also smaller fun events, group retreats, social justice activities, and fundraising activities planned every year. Here are some:

- First Sunday Lunch - A fundraising event in which the youth prepare and serve lunch from the UU kitchen every first Sunday of the month
- Tie-dyeing UU t-shirts for fundraising
- Working with Fresno Homeless Project, volunteering at Poverello House
- Attending a haunted farm near Halloween

- Baking and selling muffins
- Marching in the Pride Parade and Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade
- Pool parties, movie nights, overnight retreats
- Bridging: A ceremony during the church service for graduating seniors, where each senior has a mentor from the church with whom they meet for several months before the bridging service to give them another person to offer guidance and support during this transitional times in their lives. The mentors and seniors also meet with the DLRE a few times for workshops to guide them through thinking about becoming a young adult.

## **Junior Youth Group Grades 6 through 8**

The Junior Youth Group meets every Sunday from after the Time/Story for All Ages until noon. They are led by a teaching team who alternate turns, with two teachers always present. The Junior Youth Group is the transition class between the more traditional-style elementary classes and the more relaxed Senior Youth Group.

The Junior Youth rotate between three curricula: Crossing Paths, an interfaith exploration; Heeding the Call, which takes action on social justice issues; and Popcorn Theology, which uses movies to delve into theological topics. They play games that help them to bond and express themselves and form personal opinions and beliefs. Outside of class, they participate in community service projects, social justice activities, and their own group social events. This year, the curriculum will be 'Popcorn Theology'.

The junior high youth sometimes play supportive roles in the Youth Sunday when the high school group offers the service. This offers them an opportunity to start looking toward the days when they will be participating in the service and leading it themselves.

## **For Both Senior Youth and Junior Youth**

### **Coming of Age**

Coming of Age is the process of discovering and defining yourself, your community, and your beliefs. The program at UUCF offers an accelerated opportunity for spiritual growth of this kind. It helps participants discover the values that attract their energies and activism. They explore their independence and interdependence. The program is designed to foster strength of character and confidence in one's own beliefs. This is also a time for the community to acknowledge the development of our youth that is taking place every day. Participating in this program also offers opportunities to attend district-wide Coming of Age retreats and form relationships with Unitarian Universalist youth from other churches, as well as forging a relationship with adult mentors. The program culminates in the youth crafting their own credo, a statement of their personal beliefs, which they present to the church as a whole at a special service in the spring. We generally offer Coming of Age for 9th & 10th graders approximately every other year; it was offered in 2017-2018 and will most likely be again in 2019-2020.

### **Necessary Family Support**

Family support is essential to the success of the youth groups. We need family members to volunteer as youth advisors, social justice leaders, and hosts of social activities.

## **SPIRIT SCHOOL Policies**

### **Coffee Policy**

Children under 16 years of age will not be served coffee from the kitchen after the service. Families may retrieve coffee for their child if they wish. At RE events, children under 16 may not drink coffee unless permission is communicated to the adult in charge by an authorized adult.

### **Playground Policy**

The playground is designed for the use of children up to 12 years, with parental supervision. Children older than this should not use the playground. There is an outdoor play area adjacent to the Nursery that may be more appropriate for younger children. Unless signed into childcare or an RE event/class, the parent/guardian is responsible for their child(ren) while using the playground and on church grounds in general.

### **Options for Infants and Toddlers**

Parents of infants and toddlers have several different options for care of their child. Children are always welcome in the service with their parents. However, if you wish, you may check your infant or toddler into the Nursery with the Childcare Provider and Nursery volunteers. The Sunday service can be heard in the nursery as well as in the foyer of the church.

### **Suggestions and Concern Policy**

People with concerns regarding Spirit School should e-mail the Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration or the Spirit School Team Chair (contact info on cover and page 2) with their concern. As we strive to make UUCF a welcoming place for all, we encourage feedback. You are always welcome to set up an appointment to meet with the DLRE to discuss your concerns in person. We genuinely appreciate and welcome your input, as it helps us to ensure that we are offering quality and effective programming.

### **Cell Phones & Other Devices**

Unless being utilized for the purposes in classes, children, youth, and teachers are asked to refrain from using their mobile devices during class time in order to be fully present and engaging in what's happening in the classroom. Good practice is to collect the devices and put them in one place during the class.

Unless necessary, we ask that other toys not be brought into the classroom, as they tend to provide a distraction and cause issues between children. If there is a specific reason that your child needs to keep something with them, please talk to their teacher and the DLRE.

### **Child Supervision**

After being picked up from Spirit School, supervision of children is the responsibility of the adults with whom they came or someone they have identified. Classrooms will be closed at the end of class. In order to ensure the safety of children and the orderliness of our classrooms, we ask that children not enter the classrooms, in the event that they are found to be unlocked.

## Safety Policy for Children and Youth

The following policies have been adopted in order to ensure a safe and secure environment for our children:

### I. Supervision of Youth Classes and Activities

- A. Each group of children and/or youth should have at least two people present at all times, with at least one person being a fingerprinted adult. The Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration (DLRE) may make exception to this rule on a case-by-case basis. In some cases where adequate adult supervision cannot be secured for the class, the DLRE may cancel the class ahead of time or return the children to the sanctuary during the worship service if necessary. When at all possible, the two people present will be fingerprinted adults. At times, high school students may fill in one of the spots.
- B. If, for some reason, one of the adult volunteers has to leave the room (to take a child back to the sanctuary, to the bathroom, etc.), the door to the classroom will remain open until the other adult returns.
- C. Window coverings will be open and /or the door to any classroom or meeting space must remain unlocked. Families, please take children to the restroom before Spirit School. Children must be able to use the restroom independently; if they need help, the responsible adult will be called to assist the child so that the two teachers can remain in the classroom at all times. Children who need to use the restroom independently during class time will be accompanied to the restroom, with one teacher remaining outside. The other teacher will remain in the classroom with the door open.
- D. The DLRE and/or designee shall circulate amongst the RE classrooms and randomly monitor classroom activity during regular RE classes. They can be called on the walkie talkie for bathroom breaks and in difficult situations.
- E. All teachers and adults working with children must complete a fingerprint background check and sign a Code of Ethics for working with children and youth. Only those whose fingerprints have cleared the background check will be allowed to volunteer with the Spirit School program, and all information regarding background checks will be kept confidential with the DLRE. All Spirit School employees are supervised by the DLRE.
- F. Mandatory Reporter- UUCF staff has completed mandatory reporter training. In the case of a disclosure or suspicion, the child or youth's issue should immediately be raised to the DLRE, the Nursery Worker, or another paid UUCF staff person, respectively. (Signs of potential abuse are included in this handbook.) All teachers will be asked to complete the online Mandatory Reporter training to be familiar with the signs of abuse, though they are not mandatory reporters.
- G. There will be a number of UUCF staff trained in First Aid and CPR in the case of an emergency. The policy is to first attend the injury/illness at the appropriate level of training and call for a) the DLRE and/or a staff member and b) 911 where appropriate. Walkie-talkies are provided in the classrooms in order to contact the DLRE or designee for the day. A First Aid, CPR, AED primer will be made available in proximity to our classrooms and worship space.

### II. Off-site RE events, sleepovers, and transportation

- A. All RE-related/sanctioned outings must be pre-approved by the DLRE. Participating children and youth must have a signed permission slip from parent or guardian and a medical release form on file with the DLRE.
- B. Participation in a sleepover requires, in addition to a permission form from a parent, signing of a specific sleepover agreement by the participating youth.

### III. Discipline:

- A. Corporal punishment or abusive language shall not be used under any circumstances. This includes behavior that constitutes verbal, emotional, and physical abuse and behavior or language that is threatening or demeaning.
- B. Discipline guidelines can be found in the UUCF Classroom Behavior Policy.

### IV. Emergency Procedures

- A. See Fire Safety & Evacuation Plan for complete details of what to do in case of fire and other emergencies.

\*Youth Group Safety Policies are in the Youth Group Handbook.

## Behavior Policy

At UUCF, we strive to live into the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism, which include to respect other people and to support one another's learning and spiritual development. Children and adults are expected to behave in ways that are consistent with these principles in Religious Exploration classes and at RE events.

Students make a covenant to use:

- Kind words
- Helping hands
- Listening ears
- Walking feet
- Indoor voices

Children and youth should adhere to the following rules at all Youth Religious Exploration activities:

1. Be respectful of one's self, others, church and private property.
2. Participate in activities and clean up.
3. Be safe and report any unsafe behavior to the DLRE, teacher or childcare provider.

At the beginning of church year, members of each class write a covenant or agreement as to how they expect one another to be in relationship with one another; each participant agrees to abide by these guidelines by signing the covenant. Subsequently, class participants are reminded of the covenant at the start of each class. When children and youth behave in a way that violates the covenant, a member of the class (teacher or child) will point out to the individual that he or she is violating the class covenant.

We are very aware that Sunday morning is a very short period of time and we neither have the resources nor the appropriate time to employ behavior modification methods. If a child is misbehaving, it is ultimately the family's responsibility to ensure that their youth is behaving according to our policies and the class

covenant. If not, we will invite the youth to worship with their family until the behavior can be addressed and corrected by the family. Please note that this is only in extreme cases, and all effort will be made to engage the child or youth in what is happening in the classroom. The DLRE will work in partnership with the teachers on strategies that make it possible for them to remain, and in the event that the child is asked to leave the classroom, will engage with the family to find a mutual solution.

If a child is being disruptive:

1. Quietly and discreetly let the child know that they are breaking covenant and indicate which covenant is being broken. Ask the child if he/she needs assistance. Clarify what he/she should be doing. You may assign a peer helper if he/she is acting out because they do not know what they should be doing.

If the behavior(s) continue:

2. Without touching the child, ask them to step aside and quietly explain that if the behavior occurs again, then they will be removed from class and returned to their parent(s) in the Sanctuary. Ask if there is anything that they need that would support them in staying in the classroom. Offer fidgets, coloring, spiritual practices, books, or other activities that would allow them to stay in the classroom in a non-disruptive way and direct their energy toward something different.

If the behavior(s) occur a third time:

3. Immediately alert the DLRE, who will talk with the child and, if necessary, invite them to worship with her/his guardian.

4. Make note of the behaviors and your interaction with the child in the class notes for the day. This prevents a “he said / she said” situation and will assist with communication with the families. Include what happened, as well as what steps were taken.

These steps should to be taken only when a child or children’s behavior is disruptive to the class. A child who does not choose to participate in the class but does not interfere with other children’s learning does not need a time out. Children are welcome to stay with families in service, should they choose not to participate or not honor the class covenant.

If the behavior is acutely aggressive, whether physically, (hitting, biting, kicking, etc.) or verbally (swearing at someone, using racial or other slurs), the offending child should be removed from the classroom immediately and the DLRE notified. The DLRE will then notify the families or caregivers of the children involved and schedule a meeting to talk with the child’s authorized adult. Of course, the age of the child and context of the incident should be considered. A three-year-old swatting another child who grabbed their toy should be handled differently than a nine year-old punching a classmate.

By insisting that each of us respect the dignity of every person, we teach one another how to live according to a central UU principle. It also ensures that classrooms are as safe a place as possible for our kids, not only physically, but emotionally and spiritually as well, recognizing that many carry various levels of trauma that mean that it will never feel fully safe to them. We hope that our RE classes can be a place for our children to escape the pressures and expectations of the “real” world, to reveal their genuine and best self, and to explore what’s on their minds and in their hearts.

## **Missing Child or Teen Procedure (At Church)**

### **Immediately upon discovering or suspecting that a minor is missing during a church activity:**

1. Perform a head count of all the minors in your care.
2. Contact another adult leader to supervise the other minors in your care while you search.
3. Thoroughly search for the minor, eliciting the help of all other available adults as you search. Check each room, closet, restroom, behind buildings, and in the parking lot.
4. Report it to the Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration or other person in charge.
5. Continue searching.

### **Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration or person in charge:**

1. Call the cell phone of the child or youth, if applicable.
2. Call the Police.
3. Inform the parent.
4. Gather information about the minor to assist the search. (Hair color, eye color, clothes worn, height, etc.)
5. Assist the police.

## **Missing Child or Teen Procedure (Field Trip)**

### **Immediately upon discovering or suspecting that a minor is missing from a church field trip:**

1. Perform a head count of all the minors in your care.
2. Contact another adult leader to supervise the other minors in your care while you search.
3. Thoroughly search for the minor eliciting the help of all other church-affiliated adults as you search. Check each room, closet, restroom, behind buildings, and in the parking lot.
4. Report it to the Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration or person in charge.
5. Report it to any other adults that may be able to help. For example, hotel staff, event security, lifeguards, etc.

### **Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration or person in charge:**

1. Call the cell phone of the child or youth if available.
2. Call the Police.
3. Inform the parent.
4. Gather information about the minor to assist the search. (Hair color, eye color, clothes worn, height, etc.)
5. Assist the police.

## **Transportation During UUCF Events**

All drivers must be at least 25 years of age and must provide proof of insurance. Organizers of the event should acquire copies of the driver's license and insurance information to be kept on file in the DLRE's office. Written permission of the parent/guardian of minor passengers will be obtained prior to being transported. This permission will include all relevant details pertaining to the event, such as date and location, name(s) of drivers, time of departure, and time of return. There must be enough seat belts for everyone, and everyone must use the seat belts. No driver may consume alcohol or use any form of drug which can affect physical or mental performance during or before carrying out his/her duty as a driver. A minimum of two adults must accompany a group going off-site. In the event that two adults are not able to be in the vehicle, there must be a ratio of three, meaning that there must be at least two children/youth present. No adult should ever be in a car alone with a child or youth for a church event.

### **Reporting of Abuse or Suspected Abuse**

All persons affiliated with a UUCF event, including compensated workers, volunteers, adults, and youth, who acquire knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that one or more youth has been sexually molested or exploited, physically injured, or been the victim of significant objectionable conduct shall immediately report the incident to the Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration or Minister.

Every person in charge of an event to whom a report of molestation, injury, or objectionable conduct is made shall:

1. Determine if they occupy the status of a person required under the laws of the jurisdiction in which the incident occurred to report such incident to law enforcement authorities and if so, the person shall report the incident to such authorities. (Teachers are not Mandatory Reporters but should be familiar with typical signs of abuse and will have completed Mandatory Reporter training for awareness purposes. However, if there is suspicion or reported abuse, it should be reported to the DLRE.)
2. Report the incident in writing to the UUCF Minister or Director of Religious Exploration.
3. Report the incident to the parent of the apparent victim. Reports to parents are not required if good reasons exist for not doing so. For example, if the parent is believed to be the source of the alleged abuse. Such good reasons must be expressed in writing and delivered immediately to the Minister or Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration.

Definitions of persons required to report, and what must be reported, under the laws of California, and explanations of procedures to follow when making a statutorily required report are found in this handbook.

In taking such action, the Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration or the Minister will afford the affected youth advisor or teacher an opportunity to know the charges against him or her, to know the evidence, and source thereof, supporting charges and the right to reply to or rebut such charges. It is understood that such action will be handled with due caution and discretion.

## Definition of Mandatory Reporters

Mandatory reporters in California include, but are not limited to, clergy, administrators, and employees of public or private daycares, public or private youth centers, and youth recreation programs or youth organizations.

They shall report when they have knowledge of *or* observe a child in their professional capacities or within the scope of their employment, whom they know **or reasonably suspect**, has been the victim of child abuse.

To report an incident of child abuse or suspected child abuse, call Fresno County Child Protective Services at 559.225.8320. This phone number is active 24 hours a day.

## Recognizing the Signs of Child Abuse

### Introduction

The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single sign does not prove child abuse is occurring in a family; however, when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination, you should take a closer look at the situation and consider the possibility of child abuse.

If you do suspect a child is being harmed, reporting your suspicions may protect the child and get help for the family. Contact your local child protective services agency or police department.

**For more information about where and how to file a report, call the Childhelp USA® National Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-4-A-CHILD®).**

### Recognizing Child Abuse

The following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect.

#### The Child:

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance.
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention.
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes.
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen.
- Lacks adult supervision.
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn.
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home.

#### The Parent:

- Shows little concern for the child.
- Denies the existence of--or blames the child for--the child's problems in school or at home.
- Asks teachers or other caretakers to use harsh physical discipline of the child misbehaves.
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome.
- Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve.
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs.

### **The Parent and Child:**

- Rarely touch or look at each other.
- Consider their relationship entirely negative.
- State they do not like each other.

### **Types of Abuse**

The following are some signs often associated with particular types of child abuse and neglect: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. It is important to note, however, these types of abuse are more typically found in combination than alone. A physically abused child, for example, is often emotionally abused as well, and a sexually abused child also may be neglected.

### **Signs of Physical Abuse**

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the **child**:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes.
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence.
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home.
- Shrinks at the approach of adults.
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver.

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury.
- Describes the child as 'evil', or in some other very negative way.
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child.
- Has a history of abuse as a child.

### **Signs of Neglect**

Consider the possibility of neglect when the **child**:

- Is frequently absent from school.
- Begs or steals food or money.
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses.
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor.
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather.
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs.
- States that there is no one at home to provide care.

Consider the possibility of neglect when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Appears to be indifferent to the child.
- Seems apathetic or depressed.
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner.
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs.

### **Signs of Sexual Abuse**

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the **child**:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting.
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities.
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting.
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite.
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior.

- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14.
- Runs away.
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver.

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex.
- Is secretive and isolated.
- Is jealous or controlling with family members.

### **Signs of Emotional Maltreatment**

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the **child**:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression.
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example).
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development.
- Has attempted suicide.
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent.

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child.
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems.
- Overtly rejects the child.

This fact sheet was adapted, with permission, from *Recognizing Child Abuse: What Parents Should Know*. Prevent Child Abuse America ©

Thanks to the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information for providing this information.

## **Response to Media Inquiries**

Only the Minister or another identified adult may speak for UUCF in response to media inquiries concerning an alleged incident of abuse, injury, or objectionable conduct.

## **Removal of a Youth Advisor or Religious Exploration Teacher**

Should circumstances or events arise that indicate that a youth advisor or teacher is no longer a suitable person for working with children or youth, steps will be taken to remove said adult from involvement or contact with children or youth. Any person with concerns about an adult advisor shall contact the Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration or Minister, who will then assess the need for removal.