
Purpose

To provide safe, inclusive experiences for everyone at the Unitarian Church of Edmonton (UCE)

Definitions

Employee is a person assigned to a paid position with the Unitarian Church of Edmonton.

Friend is a person who is on the UCE Friday emails list but is not a UCE member.

Member is a person aged 16 or over who has applied for membership and been accepted as a member of UCE and has been active in the previous two fiscal years.

Visitor is a person attending a UCE-hosted event but who is not on the UCE Friday emails list or a member.

Volunteer is any person who donates their time and services to the Unitarian Church of Edmonton without directly or indirectly receiving any remuneration.

Vulnerable persons are people who, because of age, disability, or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent, are in a position of dependence on others or are otherwise at a greater risk than the general public of being harmed by a person in a position of authority or trust relative to them. This may include children, youth, senior citizens, people with physical, developmental, social, emotional or other disabilities, as well as people who are victims of crime or harm.

Guiding Principles

A safe, inclusive environment is foundational for everyone to feel welcome at the Unitarian Church of Edmonton. UCE also has a moral, legal, ethical and spiritual duty of care to its members, friends, volunteers, staff members and visitors. Each visitor, friend, member, employee and volunteer has the right to visit and work in an environment that promotes equality of opportunity, dignity, respect and recognition of diversity and is free from harassment and violence. Such an environment creates conditions where all can thrive.

The board is committed to providing an environment that supports the positive mental health and safety of visitors, friends, members, employees and volunteers.

It is the collective responsibility of all those involved with UCE to create and maintain a safe, inclusive culture within all UCE settings.

Policy

1. The board will implement internal protocols and policies to ensure that:
 - a. in advance of them commencing any responsibility for UCE, a vulnerable sector check is completed for all employees and for all individuals volunteering with any activities where participants are exclusively minors and/or vulnerable persons.

- i. The vulnerable sector check results are confidential. Documentation is kept on file indefinitely for all employees and applicable volunteers.
 - ii. The cost of the checks will be paid for by the Unitarian Church of Edmonton.
 - iii. If the check does uncover something, the minister or their designated staff member will discuss the findings with the volunteer. The volunteer is not automatically disqualified from participating.
 - b. internal controls are in place that reduce the risk as low as reasonably practical in relation to allowing any vulnerable population to be in the sole presence of a volunteer or employee (e.g., two volunteers/staff should be present when working with vulnerable people).
2. All volunteers interested in working with vulnerable persons require a signed referral from the minister or other designated staff member. This referral is only to be made following an interview with the minister or designated staff member and after the volunteer has attended UCE for a minimum of six months. (This six-month wait can be waived if the individual joins UCE from another UU congregation and is referred by the DRE, minister or their designated staff at the initial congregation).
- a. The ministerial/delegate referral and any accompany reference letters, along with the vulnerable sector record check, and date(s) of abuse training are kept securely on file in the church administrator's office for no less that 35 years.
3. To provide a safe environment for vulnerable persons at UCE, volunteers are taught to:
- a. reduce risk factors;
 - b. recognize and avoid physical situations that are unsafe or uncertain;
 - c. recognize signs of abuse; and
 - d. promptly report any disclosed, witnessed, alleged or suspected case of neglect or abuse to the minister, their designated staff person or the board president.
 - i. Under the [Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act](#), anyone who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe a child is being sexually, physically, emotionally abused or neglected has a legal obligation to file a report.
4. When notified of an allegation or complaint of abuse, the minister or the board president will appoint the Right Relations Team to investigate. The Right Relations Team will:
- a. Determine whether there is a statutory obligation to report the alleged incident to police authorities or child protective agencies, and if so, report the incident.
 - b. Express UCE's concern to the complainant and assure them of their commitment in assisting the investigation.
 - c. Maintain confidentiality regarding both the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator, unless unless pastoral support, safety and/or healing require disclosure or if the actions are required to be reported to an outside authority.
 - d. Suspend the alleged perpetrator from duties pending the outcome of the investigation if the alleged perpetrator is an employee or volunteer.
 - e. Refrain from admitting liability or from making public statements (e.g., to the media or from the pulpit) without obtaining formal legal counsel.
 - f. Contact UCE's insurance agent or broker to report the incident.

- g. Recommend to the board appropriate action(s). Examples of recommended actions for the Board could include:
- a restriction or ban on communication between the parties involved
 - removal from the staff or volunteer position
 - counseling as required
 - withdrawal of membership for the accused
 - dismissal of the complaint
 - other actions as appropriate
5. Documentation regarding the alleged incident will be kept confidential and will be kept on file in a secure location.
6. Any person affected by the abuse incident investigation process has the right to appeal to the board. The board will convene within thirty days to consider the appeal. The decision of the board is final upon a majority vote at a legally constituted meeting.

Effective date: (Board of Trustees approval date)

Last reviewed:

See also:

Destructive Behaviour Policy