



FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON

FUSN Issuance 2010-13

Policy **Information**

From: Pat Rohan/revised Susan Bartlett
Chair, Operations Council

Date: November 13, 2010/revised March 22, 2016 & February 21, 2017

Subject: **Child and Youth Protection Policy**

Purpose: To publish the discussion and the policy formulated by the FUSN Board of Trustees in June, 2003 and revised by the Operations Council on March 22, 2016 (with minor editorial changes on February 21, 2017), regarding the responsibility of FUSN adults for the well being of our children and youth.

Discussion: Adults working with children and youth have a crucial and privileged role, one that may carry a great deal of power and influence. Whether acting as a teacher, mentor, chaperone, child care worker, minister, youth advisor, or in other roles, an adult has a special opportunity to interact with young people in ways that are affirming and inspiring to young people and the adult. Adults can be mentors, role models and trusted friends of children and youth. They can be teachers, counselors, and ministers. To help our children grow up to be caring and responsible adults can be a meaningful and joyful experience for the adult and a lifetime benefit to the young person.

Adults must exercise good judgment and mature wisdom in using influence with children and young adults as well as refrain from using young people to fulfill their own needs. Young people are in a vulnerable position when dealing with adults and may find it difficult to speak out about inappropriate behavior in adults. It is important that adults, including parents, listen to their children to determine the cause of anything occurring in the FUSN community which upsets them.

Adult leaders need to possess a special dedication to working with young people in ways that affirm the Unitarian Universalist Association's

Principles. Good communication skills, self awareness and understanding of others, sensitivity, problem solving and decision-making skills, and a positive attitude are all important attributes. Additionally, in recruiting adult religious leaders we should also seek persons who have two important traits. The first is an ability to foster a social network outside of their religious education responsibility in which to meet their own needs for friendship, affirmation and self esteem. The second is a willingness and ability to seek assistance from colleagues and religious professionals when they become aware of a situation requiring expert help or intervention.

It is ultimately the responsibility of the entire FUSN community, not just those in leadership positions, to create and maintain a climate that supports the growth and welfare of children and youth. Unfortunately, neglect and emotional abuse of children is a significant problem that has often been ignored or covered up.

Policy: In recognition of the above, on June 12, 2003, the Board of Trustees adopted the following policy; the Operations Council revised the policy on March 22, 2016, adding the third point.

1. A Code of Ethics (developed by and available from the DLRE), shall be read and signed by anyone in the FUSN congregation working with youth.
2. The presence of a minimum of two adults shall be a general requirement in FUSN religious education classes.
3. All adult volunteers in religious education classes and programs involving youth shall be required to successfully complete a Massachusetts CORI ("Criminal Offender Record Information") background check prior to beginning their volunteer assignment(s). FUSN shall conduct these checks in compliance with then current Massachusetts law and guidelines. The Minister and/or Director of Lifespan Religious Education will review the results of all CORI checks.
4. It shall be a usual requirement that a volunteer should have been involved with, or a member of FUSN for a minimum of six months prior to working with youth in a leadership role.
5. In the event of an incident, any individual should direct concerns privately and confidentially to the minister, the DLRE, or the Board of Trustees Chair, who will proceed in accordance with the Massachusetts Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse by Certain Massachusetts Religious Professionals.