

Marquette Unitarian Universalist (MqtUU) Congregation Child and Youth Protection Policy

Adopted by the Board of Trustees on _____

1. Purpose

Physical, emotional, psychological and sexual safety is necessary for learning and growth. Although our Unitarian Universalist Principles guide us to justice, clear requirements and procedures elevate the level of trust and professionalism in our ministries. By clearly stating procedures to prevent harm, respond to the disclosure of harm and deal fairly with one another, Marquette Unitarian Universalist Congregation (MqtUU) seeks to ensure the safety of the children, youth and adults of our religious community.

2. Procedures

The following procedures should be followed to protect the physical, emotional and sexual safety of children and youth in our care. A copy shall be provided to all staff, volunteers, and parents.

General Guidelines for Teachers and Childcare Providers

1. The MqtUU will plan for proper ratios of adults to children when making class size decisions and curriculum choices.
2. Teachers and childcare providers will follow a positive discipline approach under the guidance of the RE Committee, see definition in Appendix A. If teachers or childcare providers are unable to maintain safety and a positive learning environment using these guidelines, the child will be returned to their parent until a plan for reintegration is developed. At no time will physical discipline be used.
3. Parents are to provide or arrange for transportation to field trips.
4. Teachers and childcare providers will ensure that age appropriate playthings and materials are used. They will safeguard MqtUU property and facilities and report any damage to the RE Director and/or the Board of Trustees (BOT) President.

Physical Safety of Children and Youth

1. In order to protect the physical safety of children, the MqtUU RE Committee will follow the MqtUU emergency procedures for response to fire and other emergencies.
2. The RE Director will collect and maintain registration forms for each child regularly in our care. Forms will include: emergency contact information, permission to transport for and seek medical care, and individuals other than parents to whom the child(ren) may be released. Completed registration forms shall be available to volunteers whenever parents are not present.
3. The MqtUU RE Committee will examine the First Aid and Emergency Response kits, which are available in the childcare classrooms. Where the Committee finds these kits inadequate they will ask for the supplies and materials to create adequate First Aid and Response Kits.
4. Teachers and childcare providers will inspect facilities for safety hazards before they are used.

5. Parents will be notified in the event that there is an injury to their child.

Selection and Management of Teaching and Childcare Volunteers

In order to assure the trust-worthiest members are caring for and teaching the children of our Congregation, the RE Committee and Director will adhere to the following procedures regarding volunteer and staff management:

1. RE Volunteers shall be active in the Congregation for six months before working with children. This may be waived on a case-by-case basis by the RE Committee in consultation with the RE Director.
2. New volunteers shall work with the Director or an experienced member volunteer until it is determined they are able to work well on their own.
3. Sunday morning volunteers shall complete a background check form. Information gathered will be used to search the Michigan State Police Internet Criminal History Access Tool. Staff and volunteers for overnight gatherings shall complete a background check with the Department of Human Services (Child Abuse/Neglect Central Registry) in addition to the MqtUU background check form.
4. The RE Committee reserves the right to decline a volunteer based on their discretion.
5. All information regarding staff and volunteers will be kept confidential by the RE Director and the BOT member who is the liaison to the RE program, except upon permission from the applicant.

3. Policy Regarding Disruptive Behavior

See established MqtUU policy.

4. Process for Filing a Complaint

1. In the event that a concern cannot be resolved with the RE Coordinator or Committee, a complaint can be made verbally or in writing to any member of the Mediation Council. The Council shall inform the BoT of complaints. The Council will meet in a timely manner relative to the seriousness of the incident or complaint. At any point, the Council may determine that the Council is not the appropriate body to address or deal with the complaint.
2. All complaints shall be given prompt and fair consideration. People presenting complaints shall be free of discrimination or reprisal.

Mandatory Reporting

Any teacher, helper or administrator of the MqtUU RE Program will follow the procedure above in the face of concerns about the safety of a child or youth who is involved in MqtUU activities. The MqtUU will comply with all laws regarding Mandatory Reporting.

Appendix A: Definitions

Introduction to Harassment and Abuse Definitions

Two principal forms of interpersonal violence are harassment and abuse, which are defined below. If an individual feels his/her personal safety has been violated in this congregation by a behavior or form of misconduct that is not specified here, s/he may still file a complaint with the Meditation Council.

Harassment

Harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome conduct that in the case of sexual harassment has sexual overtones. All forms of harassment can feel intrusive, intimidating, hostile, offensive and/or humiliating to the victim. This includes physical, psychological, and sexual harassment. Stalking is also a type of harassment. We consider these three areas to overlap, but are focusing on where the primary complaint is. Unwelcome physical touch with sexual overtones would be considered sexual harassment.

Physical – Pertaining to unwanted touch, contact, or other physical intrusions on another’s space.

Psychological – pertaining to emotional and mental levels of pestering, intruding, stalking, etc.

Sexual – pertaining to unwanted sexualized behaviors, which may be in the form of:

1. Physical conduct – touching, pinching, brushing against, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual contact, etc.
2. Verbal conduct – sexually suggestive or obscene comments, sexual propositions, threats (including threat of job loss or other punishment unless the victim engages in sexual relations), jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, etc.
3. Written conduct – sexually suggestive or obscene written material.

Abuse

Abuse is a pattern of behavior that is used to control and/or dominate another person. Abuse can be physical, psychological, and/or sexual.

Physical- includes actual or threatened harm, such as hitting, shoving, kicking, or throwing things. The harm or threat thereof may also be against family members, pets, or treasured belongings.

Psychological- includes being mistreated mentally and emotionally, such as being insulted, ridiculed, or threatened verbally.

Sexual- includes any of the behaviors above. Three major areas of concern are:

1. Sexual relating or contact between an adult and a minor.
2. Sexual relating or contact between minors that violates one of them because of the other’s role or position of power.
3. Sexual relating or contact between adults that violates one of them because of the other’s role or position of power.

Positive Discipline

Positive Discipline is a discipline model that focuses on the positive points of behavior. It is based on respect and dignity for all. Educators should act with a philosophy that there are no bad

children, just good and bad behaviors. This democratic approach recognizes the importance of firmness (rules, guidelines, accountability for actions) in our relationships with children, as well as the kindness, whereby children have a voice and are treated respectfully and lovingly. The intention is to teach and reinforce the good behaviors while weaning the bad behaviors without hurting the child verbally or physically.

There are 5 criteria for effective positive discipline:

1. Helps children feel a sense of connection. (Belonging and significance)
2. Is mutually respectful and encouraging. (Kind and firm at the same time)
3. Is effective long-term. (Considers what the child is thinking, feeling, learning, and deciding about himself and his world – and what to do in the future to survive or to thrive)
4. Teaches important social and life skills. (Respect, concern for others, problem solving, and cooperation as well as the skills to contribute to the home, school or larger community)
5. Invites children to discover how capable they are. (Encourages the constructive use of personal power and autonomy)

If teachers or childcare providers are unable to maintain safety and a positive learning environment using these guidelines, the child will be returned to their parent until a plan for reintegration is developed. At no time will physical discipline be used.

Appendix B:

Marquette Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Background Check Form for Religious Exploration Staff and Volunteers

MqtUU is vested in ensuring the safety of children in the Religious Exploration program. We will use the information provided below to search the State Police website, ICHAT (Internet Criminal History Access Tool), and for no other purposes. Based upon search results, MqtUU may determine that some individuals are not well suited for volunteering in the Religious Exploration programs.

Please complete this form in its entirety:

Name(s) _____
(Include middle name and all names used in your life including aliases and maiden names)

Date of Birth _____

Have you ever been convicted of a felony? _____

Have you ever been convicted of a misdemeanor involving children, domestic violence or substance abuse? _____

Are you currently a defendant in any criminal cases for crimes involving children, domestic violence or substance abuse? _____

If “yes” to either question above, describe the nature and date of the crime(s): _____

Search results will be shared with the applicant upon request. All information will be kept confidential by the Religious Education Director and the Board of Trustees member who is the liaison to the RE program, except upon permission from the applicant.

Signature _____ Date _____