

Integration into the Congregation of a Person Convicted of a Sexual Offense

In the creation of this policy, we are mindful of the following Unitarian Universalist principles:

1. **The inherent worth and dignity of every person.** Every person's sexuality is sacred and worthy of respect, and therefore, is not to be violated. This principle includes even those individuals who have committed morally repugnant acts.
2. **Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.** We treat others as we would want to be treated; therefore, sexual exploitation is wrong.
3. **The right to conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations.** As a community and as an institution, we have the responsibility to create a secure and safe environment.

The purpose of this policy is to create a process where a person with a history of sexual offenses may participate in our congregation in order to further their own moral and spiritual development. This process needs to assure that this person's involvement in our congregation does not pose a risk to our members and does not expose this person to a risk of a false accusations or suspicions.

Should it come to the attention of the Board of Trustees that a convicted sexual offender has entered the congregation (either by having his/her name discovered on the sexual offender's registry; or, by a member recognizing the person; or, by the person, him/herself, making it known to another member), he or she must agree to the following:

1. Meet with the President of the Board of Trustees and Contact Person.
2. Give permission, in the form of a signed release form, to the President of the Board of Trustees and Contact Person to contact their therapist or parole officer to assess their risk of recidivism. If the risk of recidivism is deemed "high," the board of Trustees shall deny the participation request. If the prospective member's risk of recidivism is deemed not high by a qualified professional that is one who is certified by the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers and/or a professional that is recommended by the local prosecuting attorney, then he/she may be allowed to participate given the following conditions:
 - a. Agree to disclosure of their sex offender status to the Board of Trustees, the RE coordinator, the mediation council, and a contact person. Any congregational member or friend wishing to know whether a sex offender is participating in our congregation may request a private meeting with the mediation council. Members or friends who seek this information are encouraged to hold it in confidence;
 - b. Agree to sign a Limited Access Agreement;
 - c. Agree to meet with a contact person periodically as defined by the Limited Access Agreement.
3. If a convicted offender is judged to be at "no risk" by a qualified professional, then the participant will not be required to sign a limited access agreement.

Individuals thought to be at “no risk” would be, for example, someone who was convicted of indecent exposure for urinating in the shrubbery while intoxicated at college.

4. If he/she is not involved with a qualified professional that could judge their risk of recidivism, then he/she must agree to be assessed by a member of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers and/or a professional that is recommended by the local prosecuting attorney at their own expense.

Within these guidelines, the prospective member is welcome to participate in adult worship services, coffee hour, committee meetings, adult education, and all adult social events.

The prospective participant understands that they are to avoid all contact with children on the congregation property or congregational-sponsored events. This includes the following:

- Please do not talk with children.
- Please do not volunteer or agree to lead, chaperone, or participate in events for children and youth including such things as religious education classes, stories or talks for worship, youth group events, activities during intergenerational events, driving or otherwise transporting children and/or youth.
- If a child in the congregation approaches you, either at church or in a community place, politely and immediately excuse your self from the situation.
- Please avoid being in the building alone when activities involving children are in session, such as RE or OWL.
- If the victims of the offender had been adults (women or men), the following steps shall be taken:
 1. Depending on the nature of the offense, all potential (and specific victims, if known) must have their safety assured.
 2. If one of the victims of the offender is a current member of our congregation, the level of trauma that the victim suffered must be assessed. This assessment should be the determining factor for considering whether the offender shall participate in our congregation.

If the individual requesting participation is denied access to our congregation, then the contact person will make efforts to refer the individual to other appropriate services.

The contact person is an individual appointed by the Board of Trustees who is responsible for the following tasks:

- Knowing community resources for child abuse, treatment of sexual offenders, and support groups for survivors;
- Knowing the State Laws regarding reporting of allegations of sexual abuse;

- Being available to members of the congregation to hear any concerns;
- Work with the RE coordinator to assure compliance with limited access agreements, to facilitate background checks of RE instructors, and to facilitate annual trainings of instructors on safe congregational policies;
- Report to the Board of Trustees annually on the status of sex offenders who are participating in our congregation;
- Be willing to meet with any sex offender who is participating in our Congregation periodically.

1. **By laws amendment:**

It is proposed that a by laws amendment be inserted under Article VI: Board of Trustees. Section 9: The Board of Trustees is able to permit the participation in our congregation of a person convicted of a sexual offense under a limited access agreement pursuant to the policy, **Integration into the Congregation of a Person Convicted of a Sexual Offense.** The Board of Trustees may deny a person convicted of a sexual offense access to the congregation if they are found to be in violation of the limited access agreement or at high risk of recidivism.

LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT

The Marquette Unitarian Universalist Congregation affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who are in need of worshipping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. However, based on your background, we have concerns about your contact with children and youth in our congregation. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk to both you and them of an incident or accusation. We welcome you to our congregation, but your participation will be limited to ensure the safety of our children and youth and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations.

Agreement:

Within these guidelines, the congregation welcomes your participation in adult worship services, coffee hour, committee meetings, adult education, and all adult social events.

You are to avoid all contact with children on the congregation property or congregational-sponsored events. This includes the following:

- Please do not talk with children.
- Please do not volunteer or agree to lead, chaperone, or participate in events for children and youth including such things as religious education classes, stories or talks for worship, youth group events, activities during intergenerational events, driving or otherwise transporting children and/or youth.
- If a child in the congregation approaches you, either at church or in a community place, politely and immediately excuse your self from the situation.
- Please avoid being in the building alone when activities involving children are in session, such as RE or OWL.

If your past victim was an adult, then you should not be alone in the meeting house with a single member of the victim population.

- Additional restrictions:
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You will have a contact person appointed for you by the Board of Trustees. You must meet with the contact person periodically: every 2 weeks for the first month; then every month for the next year; and then every 6 months thereafter. The contact person is a member of our congregation who is assigned by Board of Trustees. The contact person is a resource to assist you in becoming part of our congregation.

You accept that your status as a sex offender will be disclosed to: the Board of Trustees, the RE coordinator, the mediation council, and a contact person.

You have reviewed this agreement and agree to abide by its provisions. You understand and agree that if you violate this agreement, you will be denied access to future church functions and church property.

You understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly every 12 months and will remain for an indefinite period.

Signature:

Date: / /

Signature of the Contact Person

Date: / /

Signature of the President of the Board of Trustees:

Date: / /