

**SOUTHWESTERN UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONFERENCE
CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICIES
AT SWUUC District-Sponsored Events
April 2006**

PREAMBLE

We, the Southwestern Unitarian Universalist Conference (SWUUC, also known as the Southwest District or just the District), as an institutional body of religious communities, appreciate and recognize the intelligent, dedicated, caring, and generous adults who devote time away from their families and work obligations to minister to and with the children and youth of our congregations. District programs and events would not be possible without these committed persons.

We, the District, also recognize with sadness and outrage the reality of the physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of children and youth. We recognize its existence throughout all strata of society, including religious communities, and its potentially devastating impact on our children and youth, our families, our congregations and district and continental associations, and on our wider communities.

We recognize that religious communities, which should be sanctuaries in every sense of the word, can be particularly vulnerable to incidents of abuse because of the welcoming spirit, the ever-present need for volunteers, and the high level of trust and respect rightfully accorded those volunteers, especially in programs for children and youth. We seek to preserve that spirit of welcome, respect and trust in balance with our concern for the safety of our children, applying the test of “reasonable precaution” to any policies or guidelines we adopt. We further acknowledge that institutions operating in the best possible manner with all due concern still cannot guarantee an absolutely risk-free setting.

Though we recognize the painful nature of this situation, and realize that to address it adequately will mean change and a sacrifice of some convenience, our responsibilities to these realities and to the Seven Principles of our faith call us to do all we can to make our world a better place to live.

In this spirit, we adopt this policy statement and apply it to all events conducted under the purview of the Southwestern Unitarian Universalist Conference. We urge our member congregations and individual Unitarian Universalists to confront the issue of abuse and its potential source in religious communities, to study this policy statement and other resource material, and to take appropriate action. We do so, not in the spirit of fear, nor in the spirit of denial, but from an affirming stance that we are doing all we can to create a true sanctuary for all the children and youth of our community.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This document contains the following overall sections:

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This policies will apply to all Southwest District sponsored events such as
Summer Institute,
Fall and Spring District meetings,
Religious Education (RE) Conferences,
Youth/Adult Committee meetings (YAC)
and sanctioned youth rallies.

Though this policy is designed for District-sponsored events, individual congregations are encouraged to develop their own local policies in concert with this, so that all children and youth may be better assured that all UU congregations in the Southwest District have taken steps toward being *Safe Congregations*.

Original policies recommended by a SWUUC Task Force, Ron Robinson, Chair, 1996
Revised by the SWUUC RE Committee, Susan Caldwell, Chair, 2006

I. SCREENING AND SELECTION OF WORKERS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

SS 100 POLICY STATEMENT

Adults* in a District leadership position working with children or youth at District events must meet the following criteria: (e.g. SWUUSI Co-Co's. Chaplains at all District events, SWUUC YAC adults, SWUUSI Middle/Elementary School Coordinators and Nursery Workers)

- All adults must have been active and in Right Relation with a SWUUC congregation for at least six (6) months.
- All adults working with High School aged youth must be at least 25 years old.
- All adults working with Middle School aged children must be at least 21 years old.
- All other grade-level teachers, nursery workers and other childcare workers must be at least 18 years old.

Adults in the following positions must fill out the application (Appendix B) and sign the standard form (Appendix A) to consent to a criminal background check:

- District Staff
- District Youth Advisors
- Advanced District Youth Advisors
- Any childcare workers at District Conferences
- Chaplains at District Events
- Youth Adult Committee members
- SWUUSI Staff including
 - Children's Program (Co)Coordinator and Staff
 - Middle School Program Coordinator and Staff
 - High School Program Co-Coordinators (by 7/2008, these positions must be held by a District Youth Advisor)
 - Nursery Coordinator, and
 - All adults staying at SWUUSI Youth Camp (including the ministers)

**This policy excludes parents assisting as required in their child's program.*

Parents of participating children and youth are welcome at all district events with proper endorsement by a church official (i.e. minister, director of religious education, youth director, Board president).

SS 100 PROCEDURES

Adults applying for a position to provide direct care or supervision to children or youth at District events will:

- Complete and submit an application (Appendix B) to the SWUUC office
- Sign Consent for Criminal Background Check (Appendix A).

Candidates wishing to become a District Youth Advisor will complete the procedures as shown in Appendices A & B. Adult advisors and sponsors will fit the guidelines established by the

Committee on Youth Advisors, including being at least 25 years of age and a local youth advisor or sponsor.

Criminal background checks will be conducted by the SWUUC office at the district's expense.

The interview in Appendix D will be conducted by the District Director for Lifespan Faith Development or designee.

The SWUUC office will maintain interview and background check records. A record of disqualified applicants shall be kept on file in the District Office indefinitely, and all registration forms shall be checked against this list. This record shall include adults who have been sent home from a DYAC sanctioned event for breaking a law as well as any who have been disqualified by the DYAC or the CYA.

SS 101 POLICY STATEMENT

All adults working with children and youth in District programs or events will be carefully selected by the responsible program or event coordinator with due diligence according to the procedures of the policies outlined herein.

Any member congregation has the right to contest the appropriateness of any adult or youth to participate in SWUUC youth programming. Disputes regarding appropriateness of attendees shall be heard and decided by a Board of Review consisting of six members, three of whom shall be appointed by the YAC and three by the District Board.

II. SUPERVISION

SUP 200 POLICY STATEMENT

In all cases there will be a minimum of two screened adults scheduled at all district sponsored events.

Specifically:

- For groups (over the initial group size of 12) involving children ages 0-13 the adult to child ratio is 1:6.
- For groups involving youth ages 14-18 the adult to youth ratio is 1:8.

Corporal punishment will not be used under any circumstances.

Once at a district event, at least two adults should be together with children or youth at all times except for brief periods when unforeseen circumstances make it impossible for two adults to be present. At no time shall one adult and one child/youth be alone together out of sight of other adults unless the adult is a parent or legal guardian of the child/youth. This policy should be clearly communicated.

No adult, other than a parent or guardian, is to be alone with a child or youth off-site.

SUP 201 POLICY STATEMENT

Fire Safety will be a primary concern of adults responsible for district-level events.

SUP 201 PROCEDURES

Prior to district events, adults responsible for programming shall exercise care to note the location of all fire-safety equipment (extinguishers, etc.), to ensure the posting of evacuation-route maps, and to determine a safe place to congregate in the event of an evacuation.

During opening gatherings at district-level events, the issue of fire safety and response to fire shall be addressed. Participants shall be cautioned about safe use of chalices, candles and other open flames. Location of fire extinguishers and evacuation-route maps shall be pointed out, and the designated place to congregate in the case of evacuation shall be announced.

In the event of evacuation, adults responsible for programming shall take attendance roster and Emergency Releases to gathering site and to take roll immediately.

III. TRANSPORTATION

TRANS 300 POLICY STATEMENT

It is the responsibility of the local congregation or the parents to provide safe transportation to and from District events.

Adult drivers to, from or during SWUUC youth events shall be at least 25 years of age and possess current license valid to operate the vehicle to be driven and proof of insurance.

In every vehicle in which seat belts are required by law, vehicle occupancy shall not exceed the number of seat belts, and all occupants shall be properly secured in the seat belts.

TRANS 301 POLICY STATEMENT

At no time shall child or youth participants leave the campus of the hosting institution, except as part of planned and previously announced offsite activities under the leadership of the host institution. A minimum of two adults must accompany a group going off-site. At all times the appropriate youth or child to adult ratio must be maintained. (1 adult to 6 children or youth ages 0-13; 1 adult to 8 youth ages 14-18) In the event of an emergency, the primary on-site adult leader may make exceptions.

All off-site functions shall begin and end on the grounds of the hosting institution, unless parents are specifically notified otherwise in the registration form for the event. Side trips en route to or from an event are prohibited unless authorized in advance in writing by a parent of each child or youth involved.

Youth will not drive themselves or ride with a youth driver to district events. However, in the event that a parent deems it necessary for their youth to drive themselves to or from a SWUUC-sanctioned event, they *must* contact the DDLFD. They may have no passengers. (See Best Practices, Appendix E).

Adult advisors or sponsors shall have in their possession signed medical release forms for all children and/or youth with whom they are traveling and they shall be responsible for obtaining appropriate medical care for any child and/or youth in their custody. After check-in, the hosting institution is responsible for assisting the adult responsible for the child or youth in obtaining such care. A parent shall be notified of the need for and provider of care as soon as is possible without endangering the child or youth. In the absence of a parent, an adult advisor shall accompany the child or youth to the medical care facility.

IV. ACCOUNTABILITY

Parents and/or guardians are responsible for their dependent children and/or youth and are required to ensure those dependents are in compliance with all policies and procedures herein.

All adults, whether compensated or volunteer, who work with children and youth at SWUUC events, have responsibilities to the children and youth, to their local congregations, SWUUC and the larger Unitarian Universalist movement, and must balance these responsibilities at all times.

ACC 400 POLICY STATEMENT

All adults, children and youth at SWUUC district events will adhere to all federal, state and local laws and to the Big Four of YRUU:

- Respect for self and others
- No sex or patently sexual behavior
- No weapons, violence or threats of violence.
- No possession, distribution or use of alcohol or illegal drugs

All adults, children and youth at SWUUC district events will adhere to the smoking policy of the event, and to the policies of the host institution.

ACC 401 POLICY STATEMENT

All drivers shall have the opportunity to sleep for at least eight hours on the night prior to departure from an event. The hosting institution will be responsible for providing adequate adult roamers to monitor the facility during drivers' sleeping hours. These roamers shall be responsible for challenging inappropriate behavior, and for ensuring that fire exits remain free of obstructions.

Each adult shall take individual responsibility for getting adequate sleep to promote good judgment and clear thinking.

Sleeping arrangements for youth, children and adults:

- one person under a blanket/sleeping bag
- open, monitored sleeping rooms which may include an all gender sleeping area

Visibility and accessibility shall be maintained into all activities rooms at all times, including sleeping rooms and movie rooms, via either an open door or unobstructed interior window into the space. All doors must remain unlocked, and there must be enough light in all rooms for roamers to identify the people in the room.

ACC 402 POLICY STATEMENT

Due to the inherent power imbalance between adults and children or youth, adults will assume the primary responsibility for setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries and cultivating an atmosphere of health and trust.

Adults who look primarily to children or youth for friendship will not be considered for a position of responsibility. Adults are expected to maintain a support network of other adults.

ACC 403 POLICY STATEMENT

Care must be taken to discourage the reality or appearance of an inappropriate relationship. If any significant contact occurs *outside regularly scheduled District events or meetings*, due diligence must be exercised to contact appropriate adults (parent/guardian, church official –DRE, minister, president, and/or CYA Chair).

ACC 403 PROCEDURES

For significant contact outside the context of District events, all adults will:

- Obtain parental permission for meetings with children and youth, and
- Hold these meetings in a public place where all behaviors are easily observable, and/or in the presence of one or more of the child or youth's parents or a designated second adult approved by the parents, and
- Notify at least one of the following: the child or youth's minister, DRE, congregational president, and/or CYA Chair.

ACC 404 POLICY STATEMENT

Recognizing that the means for communication, especially electronic communication, are changing rapidly, the SWUUC upholds the principle that parents are the final arbiter of how and when their child or youth should receive communication from adults.

Adults in District leadership positions who initiate communication with children or youth *outside of the context of scheduled District meetings or events* must first obtain written permission from the parents. Otherwise, adults communicating with individual children or youth, whether by mail, telephone or other electronic means, will include the parent.

Adults in District leadership positions who initiate electronic communication with children or youth ***within the context of scheduled District meetings or events*** must copy the child or youth's parent, minister, DRE, congregational president, and/or CYA chair.

Electronic and phone communication to children or youth *initiated* by adults in district leadership will only be used for the purposes of conducting the business of the group involved. (i.e., scheduling of upcoming events; distribution and discussion of minutes; announcement of schedule changes, etc.)

Adults will not ***initiate*** Instant Messaging with a child or youth except when all of the following conditions have been met:

- All other forms of communication have failed.
- The IM is sent only to *direct the child or youth to another form of communication* for the purpose of conducting the business of the group.
- The parent has granted "blanket" permission for communication.
- The adult keeps a written record of the communication.

Adults ***responding*** to communication from a child or youth will maintain appropriate boundaries and use discernment, always acting in the best interest of the safety and wellbeing of the child or youth.

ACC 404 PROCEDURES

Parents will either give written "blanket" permission (Appendix H) or request notification concerning each adult contact not from their own church community.

ACC 405 POLICY STATEMENT

When communicating in online communities, adults in District leadership positions working with children or youth at District events will maintain appropriate boundaries

Adults will not advertise, promote, or publish links to their own personal journals, blogs or websites to children or youth.

Members of SWUUSI Youth Camp Staff, YAC, and other district committees will be subscribed to a list serve to facilitate the work of the district only after receiving written parental permission.

ACC 406 POLICY STATEMENT

Training of adults working with children and youth at the District level will include an explanation of the limits of confidentiality and rules for reporting.

Adults will explain the limits of confidentiality and rules for reporting to children and youth in their care.

ACC 406 PROCEDURES

The District office will ensure that an explanation of the limits of confidentiality and rules for reporting will be provided to all leaders of trainings for adults working with children and youth at the District level. (Appendix G)

ACC 407 POLICY STATEMENT

It is never appropriate to engage in any manner of sexual behavior with a child or youth. This refers not only to explicitly sexual behavior, but also to sexually provocative behavior or language.

Physical expressions of affection such as hugs certainly have their place, but it is best to allow the child or youth to initiate them, and they should be kept as brief as possible under the circumstances.

Adults should avoid telling jokes with sexual content.

ACC 408 POLICY STATEMENT

Adult, children and youth may NOT be in possession of the following items at SWUUC events: firearms, fireworks or other explosives, sheath knives or other weapons of any kind; illegal drugs; alcohol or pornography.

ACC 408 PROCEDURES

The hosting institution has the right to request to search any person and their belongings that might harbor such contraband, and the owner of the contraband must either leave immediately or destroy or dispose of dangerous substances, including illegal drugs and alcohol, and turn over weapons or offensive materials to a staff person at the sponsoring institution. If any person refuses consent to search their person or belongings, that person will be sent home immediately at their own (or parent/guardian's) expense.

That institution will decide if, how and to whom confiscated materials will be returned at the conclusion of the event. Possession of contraband shall be reported to those in charge (e.g., Spirit Committee, YAC, District Staff, local Board member) who shall determine eligibility of the offender to participate in future events.

Erotic or offensive text messages on clothing or other materials can be protested by anyone who is offended and those in charge can confiscate it on the grounds of respect.

An incident report of injuries requiring medical care, possession of contraband or other infractions of event rules shall be completed by the persons involved and shall be filed with the hosting institution, the YAC (if a youth event) and the District Office and reported to the District Board.

ACC 409 POLICY STATEMENT

Neither adults nor children nor youth may offer or receive body piercings, permanent tattoos, or other permanent body modification at district events.

ACC 410 POLICY STATEMENT

Adults, children and youth will abide by District policies specific to individual District events, including, but not limited to, SWUUSI and YAC-sanctioned events.

Adults, children and youth will abide by any policies specified by a local congregation or site hosting an event.

V. SUSPECTED ENDANGERMENT

SE 500 POLICY STATEMENT

Adults shall report to the person in charge of the event and the sponsoring advisor (if applicable) any signs of:

- Physical or sexual abuse (based on observation or disclosure by the child or youth)
- Threatened or attempted suicide
- Self-destructive behavior (e.g. cutting, drug abuse, eating disorders)

All adults at District events are expected to act in accordance with mandatory reporting laws of the host state. (Appendix G)

If the responsible person in charge ascertains that a child or youth is at immediate risk, the responsible person shall take any necessary steps to protect the minor.

The responsible person shall follow Procedures to contact congregational and District leaders, parent(s) of the involved minor, and Child Protective Services, as warranted.

Otherwise, the matter is to remain confidential. Release of information could interfere with successful prosecution or could result in unwarranted damage to the reputation of the accused.

If child abuse is suspected, the adult who has been suspected of unwarranted conduct will be immediately relieved of any duties involving the supervision, care, or teaching of children and youth, until the matter is resolved

SE 501 POLICY STATEMENT

Any child, youth or adult participant in district programming has the right to protest any activity or arrangement that, in their opinion, would put the health or safety of any person at risk. Disputes will be decided by the District YAC (DYAC) (at youth events) or the District Staff, with the right of appeal to the District Board.

Any youth or adult in an elected or appointed district-level position of leadership is empowered to veto and otherwise prohibit any activity that would put at risk the health or well-being of any person, or that would result in destruction of property or violation of national, state or local law. Disputes will be decided by the DYAC with the right of appeal to the District Board.

SE 502 POLICY STATEMENT

If the media contact a congregation, District body or leader about an alleged abusive situation involving the District, only the District Executive or District Director of Lifespan Faith Development (or his/her specific designee) shall speak for the SWUUC.

In general, the following guidelines apply for these situations with the public media:

- Because of the issue of confidentiality, in the best interests of the child, specific cases cannot be discussed in a public context. Particularly if litigation seems possible, it is important to protect both the District and the interests of the child.
- However, the District Executive, District Director for Lifespan Faith Development or designated spokesperson will freely discuss what steps have been taken to guard against abusive situations.

VI. CONSEQUENCES AT DISTRICT EVENTS

CON 601 Violation of the Law by an Adult

In the event that an adult at a District event has violated the law:

- The adult will leave the premises immediately (as soon as is safe).
- The adult's church contact is called immediately to inform and to arrange for proper adult supervision/transportation of children or youth from their church. Otherwise the adult's minister or president will be called to inform. The local congregation is encouraged to minister to this individual.
- When appropriate, the event Community is informed of the process and results.
- The incident will be reported in writing as quickly as possible, but not more than 24 hours after the incident to the DDLFD, who will report appropriate details to the DYAC (for youth events) and/or the District Board.

CON 602 Violation of District Policy by an Adult

In the event that an adult at a District Event has violated a district policy:

- A decision is made by those in charge of the event as to whether or not the adult will be permitted to stay at the event.
- If the adult is asked to leave, the adult's church contact is called immediately to inform and to arrange for proper supervision /transportation of children or youth from their church if needed. Otherwise the adult's minister or president will be called to inform. The church is encouraged to minister to this individual.

- When appropriate, the event Community is informed of the process and results.
- The incident will be reported in writing to DDLFD who will report appropriate details to the DYAC (if youth event), District Board and the home congregation.
- All mandatory reporting laws for the applicable state will be observed.
- The DYAC, with the DYA and the District Staff, will determine further consequences related to District Youth Events. District Staff will determine further consequences related to other District Events.

CON 603 Violation of the Law by a Child or Youth at a District Event

In the event that those in charge (Spirit Committee or YAC for youth events) determine a law has been broken by a child or youth

- The child or youth's parents/guardians are called immediately. A safe route home is established.
- The child or youth's church contact is called and told of the arrangements made. The church official is encouraged to provide ministry needed to this child or youth and not to shut him/her out of their local congregation.
- The child or youth's adult sponsor carries out arrangements made for the child or youth to leave the event immediately (or as soon as is safe). Example: The advisor takes all children or youth back to hometown; advisor arranges for the child or youth to go home by bus/plane at parents' expense; parent comes to get child or youth.
- If a youth event, the youth is automatically suspended from District youth events for 3 months. The YAC may decide to impose a longer (or shorter) period of suspension, but the 3 month restriction is effective immediately, allowing time for the YAC to meet.
- The community is informed of the process and results.
- The incident will be reported in writing as much as possible, but not more than 24 hours after the incident to the DDLFD, who will report the appropriate details to the District YAC (if youth event). The District YAC will determine how long this youth will be suspended from district youth events. The DYAC may impose requirements on the youth to be able to rejoin the community.

CON 604 Violation of a District policy (including the "Big Four") by a child or youth

In the event that those in charge (the Spirit Committee or YAC for youth events) determines that a child or youth has violated one of the "Big Four" rules but has not broken the law

- A decision is made as to whether or not the child or youth will be permitted to stay at the event. At youth events, the YAC/ Spirit Committee should convene to make this decision. In the event there is no YAC/Spirit Committee in place, the hosting institution shall convene an acting committee of three adults and three youths, to include a staff member or member of the local governing board.
- If the decision is made that a child or youth leave, he or she may either be sent home or to a safe house.
- The child or youth's parents/guardians are called immediately, told of the incident and the consequence. A safe route home is established if required by those in charge or if parent wants child or youth home.

- The child or youth's church contact is called and told of the incident and consequences. The church official is encouraged to provide ministry needed to the child or youth and not to shut him/her out of the local congregation.
- The adult responsible for the child or youth carries out arrangements made for the child or youth if he/she is to leave the event immediately (or as soon as is safe). Examples: The responsible adult takes all the children or youth back to hometown, arranges for the children or youth to go home by bus/plane at parent's expense, parent comes to get children or youth.
- The child or youth should be offered the opportunity to apologize to the community, either in person or in writing. Further, the child or youth should be offered the opportunity to perform some act of reparation.
- The child or youth should be made aware that his/her local YRUU/Church community will be informed, and that they may impose additional consequences.
- The community is informed of the process and results.
- The incident will be reported to the DDLFD who will report appropriate details to the District YAC if a youth event. The DYAC will then determine whether this youth should be suspended from future district youth events. YAC may impose requirements on this youth to be able to rejoin the district community. Whenever the YAC/Spirit Committee is involved in an incident at a district event, the incident should be recorded and the information given to the DDLFD, the youth's home church and the youth's advisor. It should be clearly established to the local church entities and the youth that the local youth group or congregation may levy their own consequences in addition to those determined by the DYAC. It is hoped that these consequences will always be determined in the spirit of love, and that the youth will never be totally excluded from the community.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION AND EDUCATION

IE 700 POLICY STATEMENT

This policy shall be implemented upon approval by the SWUUC Board.

The District RE Committee will make further recommendations to the SWUUC Board, as so charged by that Board.

IE 700 PROCEDURE

Once the policy is voted on and accepted by the Board, District staff will:

- 1) Post the policy and all appendices on the website in a format that permits printing by all users.
- 2) Send the policy and a cover letter directly to:
 - SWUUC Board members
 - SWUUC RE Committee members
 - Youth/Adult Committee members of the Southwest Chapter of YRUU
 - Ministers in the Southwest Chapter of the UU Ministers Assoc.
 - Religious Education leaders of congregations in the District

- Youth advisors/sponsors as identified by local congregations in the District
- Current participants in the Dwight Brown Leadership Experience
- Staff for up-coming SWUUSI children and youth programs and.

3) Prepare an article for the next available issue of the *Southwestern UU* newsletter.

Written copies of District child and youth policies shall be distributed annually to all member congregations, as well as disseminated through workshops and orientations at functions. A dated copy of the policies shall be posted at each event. The DREC, DYAC and CYA shall review these policies annually to ensure that current practice conforms to policy, recommending changes to the District Board when appropriate.

At least every three years, the District RE Committee will review and revise this policy. Proposed revisions will be forwarded to the YAC and CYA for review and comment. DREC will send recommended changes to the SWUUC Board, as so charged by that Board.

IE 601 POLICY STATEMENT

The District will provide educational opportunities and resources that support this policy. Though this policy is for District events, congregations are encouraged to develop their own local policies in concert with this, so that all children and youth may be better assured that all UU congregations in the Southwest have taken steps toward being Safe Congregations.

IE 601 PROCEDURE

District staff will:

FACILITATE DISTRICT WORKSHOPS: Identify potential program facilitators who can be trained to address the specific area of abuse prevention. These trained leaders then can lead programs on abuse prevention at SWUUSI, Fall and Spring Conferences, RE Conferences, Board retreats, Youth Advisor Training, Ministry with Youth Renaissance modules, etc.

PROVIDE SUPPORT MATERIALS TO CONGREGATIONS AND LEADERS: Purchase for the District Library recommended resource and training materials, such as books, video and audio tapes, etc. Include a list of these resources in the initial mailing of the policy (see above) and in a second mailing about six months later to remind congregations and leaders of the available resources.

APPENDIX A

June 2006

Dear prospective volunteer,

Thank you so much for giving of your time and effort to support the Southwest District. You are very much appreciated. As part of the process to officially volunteer, we ask you to please fill out the attached application form along with the permission to perform a criminal background check.

For your information, we perform criminal background checks through the Dallas Volunteer Center. They use VeriFYI (www.verifyi.org) to conduct these checks. VeriFYI is a comprehensive criminal background check program that encompasses a variety of ways to obtain criminal history. Despite the detailed paragraph on the form (which we may not alter due to the Fair Credit Reporting Act), the only information we will be obtaining or verifying is listed below. We will never check for credit history, military, professional license, or education. This search will NOT access or disclose ANY financial history. We only want to verify that the social security and date of birth match you as a volunteer for the SWUUC.

VeriFYI's standard search, what they call their National Search and Social Security, is a multi-state search that includes:

- **State records.** Most state records show offenses and convictions committed in certain states. Information is taken from Department of Corrections records, Sexual Offense records, Department of Public Safety records, Bureau of Investigations records or Administrator of the Courts records where applicable. To see what information each state provides, go to www.verifyi.com.
- **Texas State records.** *Available only in Texas.* This typically includes all prior arrests and convictions, including adjudicated records and juvenile offenses committed in Texas. Information is reported by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS).
- **Social Security trace.** To verify identity and ensure that the person being checked is, in fact, who they say they are. This trace includes out-of-state residence information as well.
- **Multi-State database search of criminal and sex offender records.** This will scan databases from around the country to find any record of arrest, conviction or sexual offense perpetrated.

The Fair Credit Reporting Act states that any access to credit history must be disclosed to the applicant. The background check program verifies the Name, SS# and DOB with the Credit Bureau Equifax, therefore the Fair Credit Reporting Act rules apply. This search will NOT access or disclose ANY financial history.

These reports will go to the District Office and will be seen only by qualified staff. If something comes up on your report, you will be notified and allowed to see the report yourself. All records must, by law, be destroyed within 30 days. There is an appeal process in place if you believe the report to be incorrect.

Automatic disqualification will occur if the following offences are discovered:

Murder; Abduction of children; Sexual assault; Aggravated assault; Crimes against children; Indecency with a child; Abuse and neglect of a child; Abandoning or endangering a child; Injury to a child, elderly individual, or disabled individual; Possession of or trafficking in child pornography; Or, any equivalent offense within this state or any other.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to call the district office at 817-446-0099.

Thanks again for your commitment to Unitarian Universalism in the southwest. Peace, Jennifer Nichols-Payne, District Director of Lifespan Faith Development



Background Verification Release Form

AGENCY INFORMATION

Date	Agency Name Southwestern Unitarian Universalist Conference		
Contact Name Jennifer Nichols-Payne			
Agency's Main Phone Number 817-446-0099		Agency's Fax Number 817-446-1505	

APPLICANT INFORMATION:

Applicant Full Name (Last, First, MI)			Maiden or Other Name(s) Used	
Current Address				
City		State	Zip Code	County
Social Security Number	Date of Birth	Driver's License Number		State Issued
Position Applied For				
Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female		Race <input type="checkbox"/> African American <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian <input type="checkbox"/> Anglo <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic <input type="checkbox"/> Other		

I hereby authorize VERIFYI and or its Service Provider to request and receive any and all background information about or concerning me, including but not limited to my Criminal History, Social Security Number Trace including a consumer report under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C 1681, Driving Record, Employment History, Military Background, Civil Listings, Educational Background, Professional License from any Individual, Corporation, Partnership, Law Enforcement Agency, and other entities including my Present and Past Employers.

The criminal history, as received from the reporting agencies, may include arrest and conviction data as well as plea bargains and deferred adjudications and delinquent conduct as committed as a juvenile. I understand that this information will be used, in part, to determine my eligibility for an employment/volunteer position with this organization. I also understand that as long as I remain an employee or volunteer here, the criminal history check may be repeated at any time. I understand that I will have an opportunity to review the criminal history as received by client/agency and a procedure is available for clarification, if I dispute the record as received. I also understand that the criminal history could contain information presumed to be expunged.

I further release and discharge VERIFYI and their Service Provider and all of their Subsidiaries, Affiliates, Officers, Employees, Contract Personnel, or Associates, from any and all claims and liability arising out of any request for information or records pursuant to this authorization, procurement of an investigative consumer report and understand that it may contain information about my character, general reputation, personal characteristics, and mode of living, whichever are applicable.

I understand that I have the right to make written request within a reasonable period of time to VERIFYI for additional information concerning the nature and scope of the investigation. I acknowledge that I have voluntarily provided the above information for employment/volunteer purposes, and I have carefully read and understand this authorization.

Applicant's Signature

Date

Applicant's Printed Name

Parent/Guardian's Signature
(if under 18 years of age)

APPENDIX B

See next page for the SWUUC Events Adult Application. You may also download a copy from www.swuuc.org.

SWUUC Youth Advisor Application

I am applying to become:

- District Youth Advisor
 Advanced District Youth Advisor
 SWUUSI Youth Camp Staff

_____ **M F** _____
 Last Name First Name e-mail address Gender DOB

 Address City State Zip Code Cell Phone Phone Number

 Church Name Address City/State/Zip Code Phone Number

 Employer Address City/State/Zip Code Phone Number

Do you have a current valid driver's license? Yes No License # State Expiration Date

Please complete this section concerning automobile liability insurance. We recommend automobile personal injury liability insurance of \$100,000 minimum.

 Policy Holder Name Insurance Company Policy # Expiration Date
 Are you named as an insured driver on this policy? Yes No If not, explain below:

Congregations attended regularly within the past five (5) years:

 Congregation City, State Years attended

 Congregation City, State Years attended

 Congregation City, State Years attended

Experience you feel qualifies you to work with children or youth in SWUUC, i.e. teaching, advising, trainings, etc.:

YRUU # of years _____ Position(s) _____

SWUUSI # of years _____ Position(s) _____

Work # of years _____ Position/Type of work _____

Other # of years _____ Position(s) _____

Basic Youth Advisor Training YRUU Chaplain Training Advanced Youth Advisor Training

Leadership Development Conference Ministry w/Youth Renaissance Module District Leadership School

Spirituality Development Conference CPR/First Aid Training

List any special training, education, skills, abilities and talents: _____

List any further leadership experiences at congregational/district/UUA levels: _____

References (no relatives, please). Please include a reference from your congregation (i.e. minister, religious educator, youth director, or congregation president).

1 _____
 Name/Church leadership position Phone Number # of years known

Work
 Church
 Personal

 Address City State Zip Code e-mail address

2 _____
 Name Phone Number # of years known

Work
 Church
 Personal

 Address City State Zip Code e-mail address

3 _____
 Name Phone Number # of years known

Work
 Church
 Personal

 Address City State Zip Code e-mail address

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a criminal offense related to sexual misconduct or child abuse?
 Yes No

Has any civil judgment ever been made against you for reasons related to sexual misconduct or child abuse?
 Yes No

Have you ever resigned from employment or been disciplined or terminated by an employer for reasons related to sexual misconduct or child abuse?
 Yes No

Other than the above, is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance, and care of children or youth?
 Yes No

Have you ever been convicted of Driving-Under-the-Influence or Reckless driving?
 Yes No

Have you ever been diagnosed or are currently receiving treatment for any condition (medical/psychological) that might preclude you from involvement in working with children or youth?
 Yes No

If you answered yes to any of the above, please explain (attach a separate sheet). A yes does not necessarily exclude you for consideration.

Applicant's Statement

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to provide any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for work with children or youth.

I have received and read a copy of the SWUUC Child and Youth Protection Policy and agree to be bound by and uphold them.

I further state that I have carefully read the foregoing release and know the contents thereof and I sign this release as my own free act. This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

 Applicant's signature and title as appropriate for credentials listed on this form Date

 Witness Signature Date

APPENDIX C

ACCORDANCE WITH THESE POLICIES

Adults in leadership positions in the District working with children or youth at District events who disagree with any provision of these Policies are free to discuss their opinions with the leadership of the District. However, until such time as the District chooses to alter any portion of its provisions, the adults must abide by the Policies as written.

Eligibility of youth to participate in District Programming shall be consistent with current policy, including age requirements and getting signatures from parents and church officials.

APPENDIX D

**SCRIPT FOR BACKGROUND CHECK OF CANDIDATES PROVIDING
DIRECT SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH
AT SWUUC DISTRICT-LEVEL EVENTS**

Date:

Candidate:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

NOTE: Whenever possible, interviews are to be held in person, in a *private* setting. When this is not possible, phone calls may be made. Answers to all questions are to be recorded, in writing, as the interview is taking place.

Hello, I am _____ and I serve on the _____ (name of committee, eg.: SWUUSI Board, Southwest District Youth Adult Committee, Committee on Youth Advisors)

It is my understanding that (name of candidate) attends your congregation and I'm calling to ask you a few questions in order to help determine whether or not (name of candidate) is qualified to serve in a position which requires the direct supervision of children and youth.

This interview may take up to twenty-minutes. Is this a convenient time for you?
(If "yes", proceed; if "no", determine time when you may call again.)

Your responses to these questions will be turned in to the District Director for Lifespan Faith Development; and in the event of an appeal to the outcome of the interview process, may be shared, in part or in whole, with members of the Committee on Youth Advisors and with the candidate.

How long have you known (candidate)?

How well would you say you know (candidate)?

*(If interviewee does not know candidate well, please ask ** directly below.)*

****I'd like to complete this interview and would *also* like to know if there is someone else on your staff, or in a position of lay-leadership, who may be better acquainted with (candidate). I'd like to interview them as well. Would you please share their name and contact information with me?**

Has (candidate) worked directly with children or youth in your congregation?

How long has (candidate) been involved working with children or youth?

Has (candidate) proven to be trustworthy, and able to set appropriate boundaries with children and/or youth?

In what other capacities has (candidate) served your congregation (chaired committees, served on task forces, served on Board)?

In your opinion does (candidate) understand programming for children and/or youth within the context of the strategic goals and/or mission of your larger congregation? Can you give me an example of ways (candidate) has exhibited her/his ability to see the “big picture”?

What do you believe to be the primary motivation behind (candidate’s) desire to work with children or youth?

Does (candidate) exhibit ability to work well with other adults as part of a team? Can you give me an example?

Does (candidate) respect and adhere to your congregation’s policies regarding safety and accountability?

Is (candidate) dedicated to strengthening the future of Unitarian Universalism?

Does (candidate) exercise good judgment and decision making? Can you give me an example of that?

Do you feel that (candidate) is someone capable of setting a good example for other adults working with children and youth and for the children and youth themselves?

Is there any reason that you can think of that (candidate) would not be an asset to the _____ committee/staff/board?

Is there anything else you’d like to tell me about (candidate)?

Is there anything of a confidential nature that would have a bearing on this interview that you do not feel comfortable sharing with me? (if "yes" ask *** directly below.)

***Would you feel comfortable sharing this with:

- a. the minister who serves on the Committee on Youth Advisors, _(name)_____?
- b. the District Director for Lifespan Faith Development, _____(name)_____?
- c. the President of the SWUUC Board, _____(name)_____?

Thank you for your time. I have only a few more questions to ask.

Do you have any comments regarding this interview process that you would like to pass on to the District Director for Lifespan Faith Development?

Do you feel that this interview has been conducted in a fashion that allows you to end this interview feeling that you have been able to:

 speak candidly?

 address any concerns you may have about the candidate?

 feel more confident about the checks and balances in place to insure that the children and youth in our SW District are working with responsible and caring advisors?

Now I'd like to take just a few minutes to read to you the notes I've made in response to each question I asked you. If you feel that I have not accurately represented your responses, please stop me at any time so that I may revise my notes to accurately reflect your comments.

(READ EACH QUESTION AND THE EXACT WORDS YOU HAVE RECORDED AS THE INTERVIEWEE'S RESPONSE. CONTINUE UNTIL INTERVIEWEE IS SATISFIED WITH WHAT YOU HAVE WRITTEN.)

Again, thank you so much for your time. We will consider your input carefully. Good bye.

APPENDIX E
BEST PRACTICES

Adults will be mindful that any ongoing relationship with children or youth grown to adulthood not become exploitive.

Parents should be copied on all emails not going through a moderated list sent to individual children or youth, unless the parents request otherwise *in writing*.

Ideally, any adult who receives an Instant Message from a child or youth should respond briefly with a request to move the conversation into email, keep written documentation of the conversation in whatever medium it occurs, and copy the child or youth's parents if "blanket" permission for communication has not been granted. .

Should any communication indicate imminent harm to the child or youth, whether by self or others, the adult should use his or her best judgment in staying engaged in the conversation and seeking help for the child or youth as soon as possible.

However, in the event that youth must drive themselves to or from a SWUUC sanctioned event, they must have a current license valid to operate the vehicle to be driven, proof of insurance, and the express written consent of their parents. Upon arrival at the event, they must park their car until the end of the event and they must agree to get at least 8 hours of sleep the night before the event ends.

Congregations should implement the *Our Whole Lives* sexuality education curriculum for as many age levels as possible, in order to give children and youth life skills and language to avoid, confront and/or report inappropriate behavior.

APPENDIX F

DEFINITIONS

Context of District Events: includes the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases of an event

CYA: Committee on Youth Advisors

District: see SWUUC

DRE: Director of Religious Education

DYA: District Youth Advisors

Group: those minors who have been assigned to a nursery, pre-school, or individual elementary class or specific program or activity within the context of that class, as well as youth who are taking part in a planned, organized component of their program.

RE: Religious Education

Supervision: the reasonable exercise of thoughtful action and responsibility by adults working with their respective age-groups, realizing that the immediacy of such direct supervision will vary with the ages of those in a group and the context of the activity.

SWUUC: Southwest Unitarian Universalist Conference, i.e. the District

SWUUSI: Southwest Unitarian Universalist Summer Institute

SWUUSI Sponsor: An adult to whom a minor's parent or guardian has entrusted, in writing, the responsibility for that minor in the absence of the parent/guardian at SWUUSI.

Time frame covered by these Policies: Policies governing District events begin at the arrival at the event and end upon departure from the event.

UUMA: Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association

YAC: Youth/Adult Committee

YRUU: Young Religious Unitarian Universalists

APPENDIX G

WHO IS A MANDATORY REPORTER?

A State-by-State Guide to the Southwestern Unitarian Universalist Conference

From the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information,
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/general/legal/statutes/manda.pdf>

Arkansas

Statute: § 12-12-507 (b) – (c); § 12-12-518 (b) (1)

Professions That Must Report

- Health care professionals
- Mental health professionals
- Social work professionals
- Education/Child Care Professionals
- Law enforcement professionals

Others

- Prosecutors
- Judges
- Dept. of Human Services employees
- Domestic violence shelter employees and volunteers
- Foster parents
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- Clergy/Christian Science practitioners

Standard

- Have reasonable cause to suspect.
- Have observed conditions which would reasonably result

Privileged Communications

- Clergy/penitent
- Attorney/client

Louisiana

Statute: Ch. Code art. § 603(13); § 609 (A) (1); § 610(F)

Professions That Must Report:

- Health care professionals
- Mental health professionals
- Social work professionals
- Education/Child Care professionals
- Law enforcement professionals

Others:

- Commercial film or photographic print processors
- Mediators

Standard:

Have cause to believe

Privileged Communications:

Clergy, Christian Science Practitioner/Penitent

Missouri

Statute: § 210.115(1); § 568.110; § 210.40

Professions That Must Report:

- Health care professionals
- Mental health professionals
- Social work professionals
- Education/Child Care professionals
- Law enforcement professionals

Others

- Persons with responsibility for the care of children
- Christian Science practitioners
- Probation/parole officers
- Commercial film processors
- Internet service providers
- Clergy

Standard

- Have reasonable cause to suspect
- Have observed conditions which would reasonably result

Missouri (continued)

Privileged Communication

- Attorney/Client
- Clergy/Penitent

Oklahoma

Statute: Tit. 10, § 7103(A) (1); §7104; §7113

Professions That Must Report:

- Health care professionals
- Education/Child Care Professionals
- All Persons

Others:

- Commercial film and photographic print processors

Standard:

- Have reason to believe

Privileged Communication:

- Not granted in statutes reviewed

Tennessee

Statute: § 37-1-403(a); § 37-1-605(a); § 37-1-411

Professions That Must Report:

- Health care professionals
- Mental health professionals
- Social work professionals
- Education/Child Care Professionals
- Law enforcement professionals
- All persons

Others:

- Judges
- Neighbors
- Relatives
- Friends
- Religious healers

Tennessee (continued)

Standard:

- Knowledge of/ reasonably know
- Have reasonable cause to suspect

Privileged Communication:

- Not granted in statutes reviewed

Texas

Statute: § 62A-4a-403(1)-(3); § 62A-4a-412(5)

Professions That Must Report:

- Health care professionals
- Education/child care professionals
- All Persons

Others:

- Juvenile probation or detention officers
- Employees of clinics that provide reproductive services

Standard:

- Have cause to believe

Privileged Communications:

- *Clergy/Penitent privilege denied*

APPENDIX H

PARENTAL CONSENT FOR COMMUNICATION WITH CHILD OR YOUTH

In an attempt to be a responsible steward by setting a good example and in accordance with the 2006 SWUUC Child and Youth Protection Policy, I would like your permission to communicate with your child from now through 6/07. Since I am an adult who is not part of your home congregation, I need to let you know ahead of time, that I will be in contact with your child over this church year using the following means unless you specify otherwise.

If you should have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (phone number) or (email). You may contact (name of minister, dre, board president) from my home church if you wish. You may also contact the District Director for Lifespan Faith Development, Jennifer Nichols-Payne, at 817-446-0099 or jnichols-payne@uua.org.

Please return the following permission to me at (ADDRESS). Thank you so much for your trust in allowing me to work with your child. It is a privilege that I will not abuse.

Respectfully,

ADULT (advisor, dre, minister, etc.) NAME

I (parent or guardian's name printed) am comfortable with you, (advisor's name) contacting my child (child's name printed) by the following means (check all that apply):

- Email
- Home phone, no later than _____
- Cell phone
- Snail mail

- all of the above

Signature _____ date _____