

ST. LAWRENCE DISTRICT CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICIES

PREAMBLE

The policies contained in this document represent one of the most difficult balancing acts that any of our religious communities ever undertake. On the one hand, we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person and are committed to supporting the spiritual growth of all who come among us, young and old. In this spirit, we recognize and appreciate 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; we know that they need and deserve our trust and respect to be effective and fulfilled in their roles.

At the same time, we also recognize with sadness the reality of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of children and youth. We recognize its existence throughout our 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 further 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. Finally, we must acknowledge that even institutions operating in the best possible manner with all due concern cannot guarantee an absolutely risk-free setting.

The policies and practices in this document represent our best carefully considered effort to balance these competing concerns, preserving that essential spirit of welcome, respect and trust, while at the same time providing as fully as possible for the safety of the young people entrusted to our care. While no policy can ever eliminate the need for wise and careful judgment by volunteer and professional leaders, clear and objective policies provide the necessary basis for decisions in difficult, painful, and often emotionally-charged situations such as these policies are designed to address and prevent. Implementing them may well require some uncomfortable or inconvenient changes from our previously accepted practices, but the covenant that binds our faith community calls us to fulfill our responsibilities to one another, and particularly to our young people, even at the cost of some sacrifice.

In this spirit, we, the St. Lawrence District, as an institutional body of religious communities, adopt this policy statement and apply it to all programming for children and youth conducted under the purview of the St. Lawrence District. 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:

- I. SCREENING AND SELECTION OF WORKERS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH
- II. SUPERVISION
- III. FIRE SAFETY
- IV. TRANSPORTATION
- V. REPORTING AND RESPONSE PROCEDURES
- VI. IMPLEMENTATION AND EDUCATION
- VII. RESOURCES
 - a. Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth
 - b. Code of Conduct for Adults and Youth in Leadership Positions
 - c. Youth participation release and emergency medical authorization
 - d. Information about mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect
 - e. Incident Report form
 - f. Application form for workers with children and youth (Parts I and II)
 - g. Suggested script for reference checking
 - h. Safe Congregations resource list

These policies will apply to all St Lawrence District sponsored events which include programming for children and/or youth.

For the purposes of this policy “child” refers to individuals less than 14yrs of age and/or not yet in 9th grade; “youth” refers to individuals 14-18years of age and/or in 9th-12th grade, or 19 if attending high school.

Although this policy is binding only upon events sponsored by the St. Lawrence District, individual congregations are encouraged to develop their own local protection policies.

I. SCREENING OF WORKERS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

With the exception of parents assisting in their child's program as required or as requested, all other workers, both volunteer and compensated, who provide direct care or supervision of children or youth at St. Lawrence District events must meet the following criteria:

- A. All adults and youth must have been active and in right relation with a SLD congregation for at least six months.
- B. All adults working with children and youth, and youth working in positions of leadership, must annually sign a St. Lawrence District *Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth* form, whether they are volunteering for a single event with their child or a more ongoing position. A signed *Code of Conduct for Adults and Youth in Leadership Positions* form is required annually of all SLD Youth Adult Committee members, congregational sponsors of youth participating in SLD youth events, and congregational organizers of youth events. The person responsible for the event is responsible for assuring that a current (signed within the last 12 months) form is obtained. These forms should be retained for at least three years.
- C. Adults working with high school aged youth must be at least 25 years old. Adults working with middle school aged children (6th-8th grades) must be at least 21 years old. Childcare workers, Nursery attendants and leaders of children's programs must be 18 years old, or at least 14 years old and paired with a person at least 18 years old.
- D. Because members of the Youth Adult Committee, in partnership with the District Youth Coordinator, have the ongoing responsibility for assuring safe and appropriate programming at SLD youth events, additional screening is required for members.
 1. Potential youth members must complete an application form and supply three references. Youth references should include an adult in the church community, another adult and a youth leader who have known the youth for at least six months.
 2. Potential adult members must complete an application form and supply three references. For adults, these references should be non-relatives who have known the potential worker for at least two years, preferably in relation to previous work with children or youth. Government-issued photo identification, such as a driver's license, may be requested. All adult workers will be asked to consent to a criminal background check and such check may be performed. Candidates will be interviewed by members of the YAC and the Program Consultant for Lifespan Faith Development (PC) or her/his designee.
 3. The District Youth Coordinator is responsible for assuring that applications are completed, and will confer with the Program Consultant and/or District Executive if there are questions about suitability.
- E. Criminal background checks will be conducted by the St. Lawrence District Program Consultant or designee, with the cost borne by the district. Reports will be examined by the

Program Consultant, and if any questions arise s/he will confer with the District Executive, District Youth Coordinator, and/or District President and other appropriate leaders.

- F. If for any reason a person is deemed unsuited to serve in a district position of leadership with children or youth, this decision and the reason for it will be communicated to the applicant, the applicant's congregational leadership, and to the President of the St. Lawrence Board of Trustees.
- G. The minister, religious education leader and/or Board president of any member congregation has the right to contest the appropriateness of any adult or youth to participate in SLD 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. In case of a tie, the Program Consultant for Lifespan Faith Development will cast the deciding vote.
- H. Congregational sponsors at SLD youth conferences are expected to meet the requirements in I. A, B, and C, as well as any additional Rules forms required by the Youth Adult Committee.
- I. Parents of participating children and youth are welcome as visitors at all district events with proper endorsement by a church official (e.g. minister, director of religious education, youth director, Board president).

Copies of a sample application form (including permission for background check) and Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct forms can be found in the Resources section of this document.

II. SUPERVISION

The St. Lawrence District, as well as parents and all participants in district events share in the responsibility of keeping our children, youth, adult advisors and caregivers safe from harm. No policy can anticipate every situation, but leaders are expected to exercise good judgement, follow established procedures, confer with other leaders if indicated, and keep good records of events.

- A. Children Events are defined as periods of time when the care of children is sponsored by the St. Lawrence District, as approved by the child's parent or guardian. An example would include childcare during specified hours of District Assembly or a SLD committee meeting.
 - 1. A minimum of two individuals of ages specified in I.C must be scheduled to supervise children.
 - 2. The minimum adult to child ratio shall be 1:7.
 - 3. Corporal punishment will not be used under any circumstances
- B. Youth Events are gatherings of youth and adults under the sponsorship of the SLD Youth Adult Committee. An example would be a YAC sponsored Youth Conference.
 - 1. A minimum of two adults must be scheduled to supervise every youth event.

2. Youth who are attending a SLD sponsored event must have an on-site sponsor, with one adult sponsoring a maximum of 7 youth. It is the responsibility of the registrar of each event to verify to the best of his/her ability that each youth has a sponsor.
3. Youth conferences will be conducted in accordance with the rules and procedures of the SLD Youth Adult Committee.
4. Since drivers need adequate sleep for the trip home, the hosting institution of a SLD youth event will be responsible for providing adequate adult roamers to monitor the facility during drivers' sleeping hours. Roamers will be responsible for addressing inappropriate behavior, and for ensuring that fire exits remain free of obstructions. Visibility and accessibility shall be maintained into all activity rooms at all times, including sleeping rooms and movie rooms, via either an open door or an unobstructed interior window into the space.
5. Adults should at all times be aware of their surroundings, and avoid situations during a youth event where they might be alone with a youth and out of sight of other adults.
6. 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 and assuring the wellbeing of the group. Youth members of the SLD YAC or other district committee or Board may be subscribed to a list-serve to facilitate the work of the district. Youth and their parents or guardians will be sent a welcome letter by the committee chair or responsible staff person, which outlines the expected communication methods, meetings and other responsibilities involved in the role, as well as contact information for the group leader.

III. FIRE SAFETY

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

- A. Prior to district events, leaders responsible for programming shall exercise care to note the location of 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.
- B. During opening gatherings at district-level youth 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.
- C. In the event of evacuation, leaders responsible for programming shall take the attendance roster or registration list and Emergency Releases to the gathering site and take roll immediately.

IV. TRANSPORTATION

A. Transportation To and From District Events

It is the responsibility of the local congregation or the parent/guardian to provide or arrange safe and appropriate transportation to and from District events. The SLD recommends that all youth and children ride with adults who meet the requirements in IV.B.1. Riding with youth

drivers is strongly discouraged, as is youth driving themselves if sleep deprivation is possible during an event.

B. Transportation During District Events

1. All drivers for SLD Children and Youth events must be at least 25 years of age, hold a valid driver's license, and must provide a valid vehicle registration, current inspection, and proof of automobile insurance. It is the responsibility of the responsible group to assure these criteria are met. A photocopy of relevant documents is recommended. Drivers must sign the SLD Code of Ethics.
2. No driver may be sleep-deprived, consume alcohol or use any form of drug that can affect physical or mental performance during or before carrying out his/her duty as a driver.
3. It is recommended that at least one person in the vehicle have a cell phone, and that cell phone numbers be shared among drivers and event leaders.
4. The vehicle must be equipped with seatbelts for all passengers, and everyone must wear a seatbelt.
5. Written permission of the parent/guardian of all minor passengers will be obtained prior to being transported. This permission will include details of the event, such as date and location. Emergency contact information including name of physician, health insurance information and consent to treat in case of an emergency must accompany all minors who are being transported by adults other than their parents. During travel, the forms will be kept by the driver of the vehicle, or the responsible adult traveling with a group using an alternate form of transportation, e.g. bus or train.
6. When transporting children, the driver must follow the state laws for the use of car seats and booster seats, and its regulations as to where children should be seated in the vehicle. The need for seatbelts supersedes the need for two adults in each vehicle. However, upon arrival at the destination, a minimum of two adults must accompany a group of children when off site.
7. At no time shall youth participants leave the campus of the hosting institution, except as part of planned offsite activities under the approval/leadership of the host institution. It is recommended that a minimum of two adults, accompany a group going off-site, and the appropriate youth or child to adult ratio must be maintained.

V. REPORTING AND RESPONSE PROCEDURES

- A. Departures from this policy, accidents, injuries, situations that should noted, as well as incidents of suspected abuse should be documented in the SLD Incident Report form.
- B. **Definition of Abuse:** Those who work with children and youth on a regular basis should recognize that child abuse is generally defined as the following:

1. Physical abuse – bodily injury to a person. This includes, but is not limited to hitting, biting, scalding, burning and strangulation or suffocation.
2. Physical neglect – the failure to adequately provide the essentials of life, such as food, shelter, clothing, and medical care.
3. Sexual abuse – the exploitation of a child or youth for the gratification of an adult or another child or youth. It includes, but is not limited to inappropriate touching, intercourse, incest, rape and sodomy as well as exhibitionism, voyeurism and use of children in pornography.
4. Emotional maltreatment – the failure to provide love, care, support and guidance necessary for healthy psychological development. This includes, but is not limited to verbal abuse, such as excessive teasing, belittling, and rejection.

C. **Mandatory Reporters:** See information on mandatory reporting laws in New York and Pennsylvania in the Resources section of this document

D. **Reporting Procedures**

1. All persons affiliated with a St. Lawrence District (SLD) event, including compensated workers, volunteers, adults, or youth, who acquire knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that one or more individuals at a District event has been sexually molested or exploited, injured or been the victim of significant objectionable conduct shall:
 - a. immediately report the incident to the person in charge of the event
 - b. complete an “Incident Report” form found in the Resources section of this document
2. The person in charge of an event to whom a report of molestation, injury, or objectionable conduct is made shall:
 - a. report the incident to the parent of the apparent victim (unless the parent is the abuser)
 - b. submit a copy of the completed “Incident Report” to either the District Executive and/or the Lifespan Program Consultant of the SLD as soon as possible.
3. The District staff person who receives the report shall:
 - a. assist the person who reported the incident in notifying local authorities, if indicated – law enforcement, or in many cases Child Protective Services or the Department of Social Services.
 - b. report the incident to the Minister of the congregations with whom the apparent victim and the accused are affiliated, unless there are good reasons not to do so.
4. If notification of local authorities is indicated, reporting procedures must be implemented within 24 hours following the incident.

E. Response to Media

Only the District Executive or his or her designee may speak for the St. Lawrence District in response to media inquiries concerning an alleged incident of abuse, injury, or objectionable conduct. In general, the following guidelines apply for these situations with the public media:

1. As long as the speaker has reason to believe that the incident has been reported to the District Executive serving the St. Lawrence District, the media should be referred to the DE for a substantive response to the inquiry. In particular, the District Executive can freely discuss the steps the District has taken to guard against abusive situations.
2. Due to issues of confidentiality, specific cases should not be discussed in a public context. Particularly if litigation seems possible, it is important that we protect both the District and the interests of the child or youth. An appropriate response to further media inquiry is for the speaker to state that s/he wishes to protect the confidentiality of the apparent victim and cannot comment on the details of the situation for that reason.
3. Please be cautioned that in any subsequent litigation, details provided by any person with even apparent authority of the St. Lawrence District or any of its member congregations may be used against those entities.

F. Removal of a Worker with Children or Youth

Should circumstances or events arise that indicate that an adult worker is no longer a suitable person for working with children or youth, said adult will be removed from involvement or contact with children or youth. If the worker in question is a minister, the UUA's Office of Ethics and Safety must be contacted (617-948-6462). Any person with concerns about an adult worker shall contact the District Lifespan Program Consultant or District Executive, who will assess the need for removal. The District staff then will consult with necessary parties, including appropriate leadership of the worker's local congregation and the St. Lawrence District Youth-Adult Committee (YAC) to determine whether such action is necessary. The District staff then will inform the SLD Board President and, if appropriate, shall also inform their supervisor in the District Services Staff Group of the UUA.

In taking any such action, the District staff will afford the affected worker an opportunity to know the charges against him or her, and to know the evidence, and source thereof, supporting such charges. The worker will also be given the right to reply to or rebut such charges. Our Unitarian Universalist principles, which call on us to apply fairness and compassion in our relationships with each other, will guide our actions and decisions.

It is understood that such action will be handled with due caution and discretion, and that the professional staff of the St. Lawrence District has the full backing and support of the district Board in implementing this policy. Because of potential exposure to charges of discrimination or other legal issues, the Executive Committee of the Board shall be promptly advised of the circumstances surrounding any removal action under this policy.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION AND EDUCATION

A. Implementation Process:

1. A draft of the policy will be presented to, and input solicited from, the SLD Board and District Executive, the SLD Religious Education Committee, the SLD Youth-Adult Committee and ministers in the Iroquois chapter Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association.
2. A revised proposal will be presented to the SLD Board and District Assembly for approval. Upon acceptance, the policy and a cover letter will be sent to the following parties:
 - SLD Board and Staff
 - SLD Religious Education Committee
 - SLD Youth Adult-Committee
 - Young Adult-Campus Ministry Committee
 - Ministers serving congregations in the SLD
 - Religious education leaders of congregations in the SLD
 - Youth advisors in SLD congregations
 - Leaders for upcoming district events
3. The policy will be posted on the St. Lawrence District website in a format that permits printing by all users.
4. Information about the policy will be included in the SLD news packet mailed to all congregations.
5. An electronic announcement will be sent via the SLD's list-serves.
6. One year after implementation, and at least every three years thereafter, the SLD Religious Education Committee, or another group appointed by the SLD Board, will review and revise this policy. Input will be solicited from interested parties via the SLD website and regular communication channels. Proposed revisions will be forwarded to the YAC (and to the RE Committee if they are not the reviewing committee) for review and comment. Recommended changes will then be presented to the SLD Board for approval and implementation.

B. Education:

1. Risk management training will be offered on a regular basis in the district, and all SLD sponsored Youth Advisor trainings shall inform participants about the contents of this policy.
2. Congregations will be made aware of the availability of training resources in the district's Gould Library and through the UUA. A resource list will be included in the Resources section of this policy and in the handouts distributed during risk management workshops.
3. When possible, it is recommended that adults in the SLD who will be working with children or youth take the online Balancing Acts course currently available free at <http://courses.neari.com>

Code of Ethics

For Adults and Older Youth Working with Children and Youth St. Lawrence District – Unitarian Universalist Association

Adults and older youth who are in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering spiritual development of both individuals and the community. It is, therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions be well qualified to provide the special nurture, care, and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility.

The relationship between youth and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if positive potential is to be realized. There are no more important areas of growth than those of self-worth and the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being. Adults play a key role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth. Wisdom dictates that children, youth, and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care; therefore leaders will refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive, or erotic behavior with children and youth. Neither shall they sexually harass or engage in behavior with youth that constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.

Leaders shall be informed of the code of ethics and agree to it before assuming their role. In cases of violation of this code, appropriate action will be taken.

I have read and understand the above statements of position, expectations, and actions.

Name (printed):

Name (signed):

Date:

ST LAWRENCE DISTRICT, U. U. A.

Code of Conduct for Adults and Youth in Leadership Positions

Adults and youth in leadership positions who work with youth at St. Lawrence District events are expected to always have the best interests of children and youth at heart. Adults are expected to nurture the physical, emotional, and spiritual growth of children and youth by fostering an environment of kindness, trust, respectfulness, and fun. No one's enjoyment should ever be at the expense of another person's health, wellbeing, or self-esteem. Our charge to children and youth workers is to encourage kindness and genuineness among the children and youth, and to discourage unkindness and falseness. The following are specific expectations that the District has for adults and youth in leadership positions who work with children and youth:

- **Sleep**—Workers at District events more than one day in length are expected to get adequate sleep during District events, so that they may be alert and clear thinking, and able to maintain good judgment and perform their expected duties in a competent and professional manner.
- **Sexualized Behavior**— Engaging in any manner of sexual behavior with a child or youth is never appropriate. This refers not only to explicitly sexual behavior, but also to sexually provocative behavior or language. It is not appropriate to tell jokes with sexual content, for example, or to make “double entendres.” Physical expressions of affection, such as hugs, have their place, but are best initiated by the child or youth and kept from being prolonged by the adult.
- **Confidentiality**—Effective relationships between youth and the adults and youth who work with them in leadership positions are established through trust, understanding, patience and the emotional bonds that develop. Confidentiality is an important component of this process, but there are limits to confidentiality and circumstances under which the confidential relationship must be broken. If you learn that a child or youth is the victim of abuse, is suicidal, has a serious drug problem, etc. **FOR THE SAFETY OF BOTH THE YOUTH AND YOURSELF, YOU MUST NOT KEEP SUCH INFORMATION TO YOURSELF.** For this reason, never give children or youth the impression that you will keep secrets for them. For the most part, a covenant of confidentiality will mean that you do not repeat information told to you in confidence. However, when information is of a major crisis nature, encourage the child or youth to seek help from a parent or other authority figure. In addition, you yourself **MUST** consult with a person of greater authority in the district about an appropriate course of action. If in doubt, it is best to initiate this conversation. Adults and youth in leadership positions who work with children and youth under the aegis of the district are responsible not only to the children and youth, but to the district as well. Remember: you are acting both ethically and legally as an agent of the St. Lawrence District.

The following expectations are specific to ADULTS working with youth:

- **“Friendship” with Youth**—Although we hope that youth and adults will develop a genuine fondness for one another, any adult who looks to youth for “friendship” is not sufficiently mature to be in a supervisory position. A friendship is reciprocal, where neither person has more responsibility for the health of the relationship than the other. This is antithetical to the adult/youth relationship, where the adult is the one who assumes primary responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries and cultivating an atmosphere of health and trust. It is expected that relationships that an adult has with youth who have grown to adulthood will not become exploitative.
- **Unofficial Contact with Youth**—Sometimes a genuine mentoring relationship will develop between a youth and an adult. Such relationships can be not only healthy, but sometimes transformative for both. It is our concern however, that in some cases a “predator,” who does not have the best interest of the youth at heart, may try to disguise an unhealthy relationship with a youth as a mentoring relationship. Therefore, if you wish to be in contact with one of our youth outside the normal channels of district-sponsored events, it is imperative that your behavior both be and appear to be above reproach. Any relationship you develop with a youth outside of district-sponsored events must be with the knowledge and consent of the parents or guardians. Furthermore, you should let an appropriate member of the district know what you are doing (such as District Staff, a member of the Youth/Adult Committee or a member of the District RE Committee) and notify the youth’s minister, or religious education leader, or congregational president. This is for the protection of the youth, but also for your own protection. You will best protect yourself from false accusations of misconduct by keeping the district and the parents and guardians aware of your actions.
- **Electronic Communications--** Recognizing that the means for communication, especially electronic communication, are changing rapidly, the SLD upholds the principle that parents are the final arbiter of how and when their youth should receive communication from adults. Electronic and phone communication to youth initiated by adults in district leadership will only be used for the purposes of conducting the business of and assuring the health of the group involved (e.g. scheduling of upcoming events, distribution and discussion of minutes, announcement of schedule changes, etc.). Youth members of the SLD YAC or other district committees may be subscribed to a list-serve to facilitate the work of the district. Adults responding to communication from a youth, or communicating in online communities will maintain appropriate boundaries and use discernment, always acting in the best interest of the SLD and keeping in mind the safety and wellbeing of the child or youth. The district maintains a website and a youth link which is available for the general public, including children and youth.

Accordance with this Code of Conduct

Any district paid or volunteer worker with children or youth who disagrees with any provision of the code is free to discuss his/her opinions with the leadership of the district. However, until such time as the district chooses to alter any portion of its provisions, the worker must abide by the code as written. By signing below, I affirm that I have read this Code of Conduct, and agree to abide by it. If I violate any of its provision, I understand that I may be removed as a worker at district events. Additionally, I will notify the St. Lawrence district of any arrest, charge or conviction against me during the time that I am serving as a worker with children or youth in SLD. .

Signed _____ Date _____

Print Name _____

Role/Title _____ Congregation _____

ST. LAWRENCE DISTRICT, U. U. A.
PERMISSION FOR TRANSPORTATION AND AUTHORIZATION
FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT OF MINORS

I, _____, the undersigned represent that I am the Parent/Guardian of _____.
I grant permission for my child to participate in the following adult-supervised activity: _____.

The activity will take place at the following location(s): _____
_____ from (date & time) _____

to (date & time) _____, and I grant permission for my child to be transported **during this event** as described below by reasonable and safe means:

I agree and hereby do release and hold harmless the St. Lawrence District, the hosting member congregation and/or any and all adult supervisors for the activity, from and for any and all liability which may arise for damages, loss or injuries, either to person or property, which my child may sustain while engaged in the activity conducted, including, but not limited to, any damages, loss or injuries that may be sustained through transportation to and from the activity.

Should any injury occur, I grant permission for my child to receive emergency treatment from an appropriate health care provider to be selected by the adult supervisor of the activity, when, in such supervisor's opinion, the need for such treatment is immediate, and when efforts to contact me (us) are unsuccessful. I also agree to pay and be responsible for all medical, hospital or other expenses which the St. Lawrence District and/or any and all adult supervisors may incur as a result of securing such treatment.

I further agree to assume responsibility for any liability which may arise for damages, loss or injuries, as described herein which may be caused or contributed to by my son/daughter to the person or property of others.

Name (printed) _____

Signature: _____

Relationship to Participant: _____ Date: _____

Home address: _____ Email _____

Home phone number: _____ Emergency phone number: _____

Name of Physician: _____ Physician's phone number: _____

Health Insurance provider: _____ Policy/Group#: _____

Allergies: _____ Physical limitations: _____

Current Medications: _____ Other needs _____

MANDATED REPORTING LAWS

Mandated reporters of child or elder abuse or neglect in all 50 states and the District of Columbia are medical personnel, school personnel, daycare providers, social service personnel, mental health care personnel and law enforcement personnel. The extent of the knowledge that triggers the legal duty to report is “a reasonable cause to suspect” abuse or neglect. The report must be made to a child protection agency or a law enforcement agency. Reporting only to a parent or relative will **not** satisfy the reporter’s legally-mandated duty to report. Every state and the District of Columbia have a law that absolutely protects any reporter of abuse or neglect from civil and criminal liability as long as the report was made in “good faith”. The following are laws specific to the states of New York and Pennsylvania:

New York:

Who Must Report

- Physicians; registered physician assistants; medical examiners; coroners; dentists and dental hygienists, optometrists; chiropractors; registered nurses; hospital personnel engaged in the admission, examination, care or treatment of persons; or a Christian Science practitioner;
- School officials; social service workers; day-care center workers; providers of family or group family day-care; employees or volunteers in a residential care facility; or any other child care or foster care worker;
- Psychologists; mental health professionals; substance abuse counselors; or alcoholism counselors;
- Peace officers; police officers; district attorneys or assistant district attorneys; or other law enforcement officials.

Circumstances

- When they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child coming before them in their professional or official capacity is an abused or maltreated child: or
- When they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is an abused or maltreated child where the parent, guardian, custodian or other person legally responsible for such child comes before them in their professional or official capacity and states from personal knowledge facts, conditions or circumstances which, if correct would render the child an abused or maltreated child.

Privileged Communication

- None

Pennsylvania

Who Must Report

- Licensed physicians, medical examiners, coroners, funeral directors, dentists, optometrists, chiropractors, podiatrists, registered and licensed practical nurses, hospital personnel engaged in the admission, examination, care or treatment of persons, Christian Science practitioners;
- Members of the clergy, school administrators, schoolteachers, school nurses, social services workers, day-care center workers or any other child-care or foster-care workers, mental health professionals, peace officers or law enforcement officials.

Circumstances

- When, in the course of their employment, occupation or practice of their profession, they come into contact with children who they have reasonable cause to suspect, on the basis of their medical, professional or other training and experience, that a child coming before them in their professional or official capacity is an abused child.

Privileged Communications

- Except with respect to confidential communications made to an ordained member of the clergy which are protected under law relating to confidential communications to clergymen, the privileges communication between any professional person required to report and the patient or client of that person shall not apply to situations involving child abuse and shall not constitute grounds for failure to report as required by this chapter.

**Reports of abuse should be made to your local Children’s Protective Services Agency or you may use these toll-free numbers:

New York 1-800-324-3720

Pennsylvania 1-800-932-0313

The National Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (1-800-422-4453 or <http://childhelpusa.org>) provides state-by-state information on how to report abuse in each community.

**ST. LAWRENCE DISTRICT, Unitarian Universalist Association
INCIDENT REPORT FORM**

- Date of incident: _____ Today's Date: _____
- Time and place(s) of incident: _____
- Title of the event where the incident occurred: _____
- Name and position of reporter: _____
- Name(s) of persons involved: _____
- Brief description of the incident:
(Use the back of this form as needed, and attach any supporting materials when completed)

- Did you observe the described incident directly? (please circle) Yes No
- If not, who or what was your source of information? (Please be specific) _____

- Description of any action taken by the reporter. For example, to whom did you relay the information and what was reported? (please be specific) _____

Signature of Reporter _____

Contact Information for Reporter _____

**** Return this completed form with any supporting material to the person in charge of the St. Lawrence District event. A copy of this form should be submitted to the District Executive and the Program Consultant for Lifespan Faith Development as soon as possible.**

Application Form: Part I

For adults or youth who wish to serve in leadership positions with children or youth at St. Lawrence District sponsored events.

Role or Position applied for _____ Date _____

Full Name: _____ Date of Birth _____
 First Middle Last

Home Street Address _____

Phone(s) _____ Email Address _____

CONGREGATION HISTORY AND PRIOR WORK WITH CHILDREN AND/OR YOUTH

Name of congregation with which you are affiliated:

Length of affiliation:

Other congregations you have attended regularly in the past 5 years:

List all previous congregational work involving children and/or youth (for example: the name of congregation, names of advisors/religious educators, your role, and responsibilities performed during your service.)

List all previous community (non-church) work involving children and/or youth (for example: name of organizations, addresses, supervisors' names, your role, and responsibilities performed during your service.)

List any gifts, callings, training, education, experiences or other factors that have prepared you for work with children and/or youth:

For adults only:

Driver's License # _____ State _____ Social Security # _____

Automobile Insurance Co. _____ Policy # _____

Employer _____ Work Phone _____

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty or no contest to any felony or misdemeanor? (circle one)
YES NO

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty or no contest to a criminal offense related to sexual misconduct or child abuse? (circle one) YES NO

Has any civil judgment ever been made against you for reasons related to sexual misconduct or child abuse? (circle one) 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? (circle one) 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? (circle one)
YES NO

If you will be driving children and/or youth, please answer the following two questions: Have you ever been convicted of Driving-Under-the-Influence or Reckless Driving? (circle one) YES NO

Do you currently have any traffic points on your driver's license? (circle one) YES NO

If you answered YES to any of the above, please explain (attach a separate sheet if needed).

Application Form: Part II

REFERENCE AND BACKGROUND CHECK AUTHORIZATION

For adults or youth who wish to serve in leadership positions with children or youth at SLD sponsored events.

Please provide the names and contact information for three references (including at least one congregational leader or professional staff person) who have known you for at least two years (six months for youth) and can recommend you as appropriate for a leadership role in programs for children and youth. If you are applying to work with youth, please include one teenager and two adults as references. No relatives please.

1) Name _____ Role _____

Phone # _____ Email Address _____

2) Name _____ Role _____

Phone # _____ Email Address _____

3) Name _____ Role _____

Phone # _____ Email Address _____

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references listed in this application to provide any information or opinions that they may have regarding my character and fitness for work with children or youth. I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person identified by me in this application. I also authorize the St. Lawrence District to conduct a Criminal Background Check. In consideration of receipt and evaluation of this application by the St. Lawrence District of the UUA, I hereby release any individual, congregation, the St. Lawrence District including the record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply, with this authorization.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by these policies and the Code of Conduct of the St. Lawrence District. 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

Date

Witness Signature

Date

Do not write below this line; for office use only

Reviewed & Signed References Checked Background Check Copy on File Rejected

**SUGGESTED SCRIPT FOR REFERENCE CHECK OF CANDIDATES PROVIDING
DIRECT SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH AT SLD EVENTS**

Date:

Candidate:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Hello, I am _____ and I serve on the _____ (name of committee)

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.)

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?

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 District Executive, _____ (name) _____?
- b. the District Program Consultant for Lifespan Faith Development, _____ (name) _____?
- c. the President of the SLD Board, _____ (name) _____?

Thank you so much for your time. We will consider your input carefully. Good bye.

Safe Congregation Resources

1. The main UUA website for safety information, with links to numerous resources, may be found at <http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/ethicscongregational/index.shtml>
2. Information specifically relating to responsible staffing and screening guidelines may be found at <http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/responsiblestaffing/index.shtml>
3. *Balancing Acts – Keeping Children Safe in Congregations* by Deborah Haffner
 - written document available online at <http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/balancingacts/index.shtml>
 - register for and take the new, free online interactive curriculum at <http://courses.neari.com>
4. *The Safe Congregation Handbook: Nurturing Healthy Boundaries in Our Faith Communities* by Patricia Hoertdoerfer and Frederick Muir.
5. A resource for free forms, booklets, DVDs, etc. is Church Mutual, which is the company that insures most UU churches. Their website is www.churchmutual.com Go to Safety Resources.
6. ChoicePoint is a company which provides low cost background checks for group insured through the Church Mutual Insurance Company. Online resources, including a Risk Management Toolkit and research studies are available at <http://www.choicepoint.com/nonprofit/resources.html>.
7. A great resource for advocacy, to “sell” the concept of a safety policy when a congregation is deciding whether or not it needs one, is www.reducingtherisk.com. The district library has several of the books and DVDs that are featured on this site.
8. Link to the Ohio-Meadville District's "Child and Youth Protection Policy" from <http://www.ohiomeadville.org/geninfo/policy.html>
9. Three congregations who have posted policies online:
 - From the UU Society of Schenectady, NY:
<http://fussonline.org/Trustees/FUSS%20Safe%20Congregations%20Policy%20REV%205%202007.pdf>
 - From the Northshore UU Church (suburban Chicago) go to www.nsuc.org and go to Education and then Safety Policy.
 - From Live Oak UU Church (Austin, TX) go to <http://www.liveoakuu.org/abusepolicy.pdf>
10. The UUA’s own policy, “Responsible Staffing”, may be viewed at:
http://archive.uua.org/programs/ministry/staffing_guides.html
This site provides questions to use when checking references, recommends the following companies for use in **national background checks**, and provides much more useful info.
 - Oxford Document Management Company, Inc.
655 West Highway 10
Anoka, MN 55303-1623
(800) 801-9114
<http://uua.oxforddoc.com>

Note: The UUA has contracted with this agency to conduct background checks at a reduced cost.

- Church Mutual Insurance Company's Screen Now program, with services provided by ChoicePoint
3000 Schuster Lane
P.O. Box 357
Merrill, Wisconsin 54452
(800) 554-2642
www.churchmutual.com

11. For criminal **background checks in the state of New York**, contact:

New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services
Sex Offender Registry
4 Tower Place
Albany, New York 12203

Phone Numbers:

Main Phone number, non-search, Monday - Friday 8:00a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
518-457-3167

For database searches available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year
800-262-3257

email: infodcjs@dcjs.state.ny.us

Website: <http://www.criminaljustice.state.ny.us/nsor/index.htm>

12. To report an incident of abuse: the National Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-4-A-Child or <http://childhelpusa.org>) provides state-by-state information on how to report abuse in each community.