

**CODE OF ETHICS for Persons Working with Children and Youth
FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF AUSTIN**

The Role of Adult Leaders

Adults working with young people in the context of our Unitarian Universalist faith have a crucial and privileged role, one that carries with it a great deal of power and influence. Whether acting as youth advisor, chaperone, child-care worker, teacher, minister, registrant at a youth-adult conference or in any other role, the adult has a special opportunity to interact with our young people in ways which are affirming and inspiring to the young people and the adult. Adults can be mentors to, role models for, and trusted friends of children and youth. They can be teachers, counselors, and ministers. To help our children grow to be caring and responsible adults can be a meaningful and joyful experience for the adult and a lifetime benefit to the young person.

While it is important that adults be capable of maintaining meaningful friendships with the young people they work with, adults must exercise good judgment and mature wisdom in using their influence with children and youth and refrain from using young people to fulfill their own needs. Young people are in a vulnerable position when dealing with adults and may find it difficult to speak out about the inappropriate behavior of adults.

Adult leaders need to possess a special dedication to working with our young people in ways that will affirm the Unitarian Universalist Association Principles. Good communication skills, self awareness and understanding of others, sensitivity, problem-solving and decision-making skills, and a positive attitude - all are important attributes. Additionally, leaders should have a social network outside their religious education responsibility in which to meet their own needs for friendship, affirmation and self-esteem; and be willing and able to seek assistance from colleagues and religious professionals when they become aware of a situation requiring expert help or intervention.

It is ultimately the responsibility of the entire church community, not just those in leadership positions, to create and maintain a climate that supports the growth and welfare of children and youth.

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Adults and older youth who are in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and have a role in fostering the 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 young people and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if the positive potential of their relationship 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 role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth. Sexual conduct of any kind between adults and infants, children, or youth is unethical and severely injurious. 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 children and youth that constitutes verbal, emotional, or physical abuse.

I have never been convicted of a crime involving a minor, and I understand that if this statement is not true, I must resign from my volunteer responsibilities.

I have read and agree to abide by the Code of Ethics.

Signature

Date

RE Staff Signature

Date