

**Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley
Children and Youth Religious Education Program**

**Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley
Children and Youth Religious Education Program
Policies and Procedures Manual**

Table of Contents:

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| RE Committee Mission & Goals | 2 |
| Church Organization: Children and Youth RE Program | 4 |
| RE Committee Tasks and Responsibilities | 5 |
| Teacher Job Descriptions | 7 |
| Youth Advisor Job Descriptions | 9 |
| Classroom Guidelines | 10 |
| Safety Policies | 11 |

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley

Children and Youth Religious Education Program

Serving Children and Youth ages 3-18

MISSION & GOALS

Mission

The Children's Religious Education Program at UUCSV creates a safe, supportive and welcoming environment that encourages our children to explore their own beliefs, spirituality and UU heritage and traditions and to respect self, others and our planet.

Program Goals

The Religious Education (RE) Committee has adopted a series of goals for the children and youth that reflects the mission of the RE Program at the UUCSV and ensures that each child is exposed to concepts which will shape a personal religious identity.

The following goals are an integral part of the program at each class group level:

1. To build a positive sense of self;
2. To explore their own spirituality;
3. To see themselves as part of the church community by developing peer and intergenerational relationships;
4. To celebrate Unitarian Universalist principles and beliefs;
5. To develop an understanding and respect for the diversity in society;
6. To develop a sense of social responsibility with the ability to translate it into action;
7. To develop an understanding and respect for different religions and belief systems; and
8. To practice environmental awareness.

The above goals are general to the whole program. Specific goals at each class grouping during a three-year cycle are as follows:

PRESCHOOL (Ages 3 – 4 years*)

1. To feel comfortable in their RE group;
2. To learn to cooperate and share with one another; and
3. To create the foundations for developing friendships.

PRIMARY (Grades Kindergarten – 2)

1. To learn and demonstrate positive group interactions;
2. To develop friendships;
3. To develop an awareness and acceptance of physical self;
4. To feel connected to the larger world environmentally, culturally, socially, and spiritually; and
5. To begin to explore diversity in their culture.

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley

Children and Youth Religious Education Program

INTERMEDIATE (Grades 3-5)

1. To develop a respect and appreciation for diversity;
2. To learn Unitarian Universalist history, principles and beliefs;
3. To explore and identify the beliefs of other religions;
4. To explore the meaning of living your religion through peace and justice within yourself, with others, and with the environment.

MIDDLE SCHOOL (Grades 6-8)

1. To explore their sexuality;
2. To increase self-awareness in light of the physical and emotional changes they are experiencing;
3. To develop an understanding of their growing independence and responsibility;
4. To define and explore their personal and religious beliefs based on an overview of world religions; and
5. To begin to develop a moral, ethical, Unitarian Universalist framework for living and dealing with daily life issues, e.g. peer relations, intolerance in society, and integrity.

HIGH SCHOOL (Grades 9 – 12)

1. To develop a moral, ethical, Unitarian Universalist framework for living and dealing with daily life issues, e.g. peer relations, intolerance in society and integrity;
2. To develop the ability and knowledge to take action on issues about which they feel strongly; and
3. To provide an outlet for values clarification.

YOUNG RELIGIOUS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS (YRUU) (Grades 9 – 12)

Create a caring and supportive community where youth can become more aware of themselves and others through Spirituality, Education, Leadership, Fellowship and Social Action, affirming the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism.

* Students are grouped according to the grade they would be in if they were following a normal public school path (without advancing or repeating a grade). This eliminates the option of changing classes due to a birthday in the middle of the year.

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley
Children and Youth Religious Education Program

CHURCH ORGANIZATION

The Board: the elected governing body of the church

- **Director:** a member of the board. The Director is the board contact for the Children and Youth Religious Education Committee. The Director is in close contact with the Religious Education Committee chairperson and will relay necessary information from the Board. The RE Committee will communicate to the board through the Director.
- **Vice President – Human Resources:** responsible for “personnel issues” such as the DRE salary, performance evaluation and contract.

Children & Youth Religious Education Committee: oversees the running of the Children and Youth Religious Education Program. This committee makes all decisions regarding the religious education program.

- **Religious Education Committee Chairperson –** contact person for the RE committee. If there is a problem or question that needs to go before the RE Committee, contact the chairperson.

Director of Religious Education (Children & Youth): the DRE helps implement programs and policies for students as determined by the RE Committee. The DRE is the liaison Between the RE Committee and the Religious Education volunteers and parents. This is a paid position.

RE volunteers: work with the students using the curriculum chosen by the RE Committee to meet the goals set forth by the Committee.

Minister: Supervises the DRE and works with both the DRE and the RE Committee to ensure the integrity of the program. (8/15/2006)

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley

Children and Youth Religious Education Program

CHILDREN & YOUTH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMITTEE

TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Children and Youth Religious Education Committee is responsible for the religious education of UUCSV children and youth Preschool – Grade 12.

Children and Youth Religious Education Sunday Program

- Develop and maintain the mission and vision statements.
 - ◆ Establish goals for each age group.
 - ◆ Select curriculum to support goals.
 - ◆ Implement program to support goals.
- Assist DRE in recruiting, training and supporting RE volunteers.
- Develop safety policies for RE volunteers and classrooms.
- Develop classroom guidelines for students, parents and RE volunteers.
- Evaluate the RE Program.

General

Establish the budget for the RE Program.

Church Administrator will maintain records.

Communicate with Board and congregation regarding the RE Program

- Annual Report
- Newsletter
- Meet with Board Liaison, Board, Committee Chairs and Minister when necessary.
- Maintain committee presence and act as buffer to DRE (fielding questions, etc...) on Sunday mornings as RE Greeters.

COMMITTEE POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

The Committee Chair:

1. Sets agenda before meetings;
2. Conducts meetings;
3. Delegates tasks to appropriate committee member and manages follow-up;
4. Maintains committee morale and well being;
5. Keeps the long view of the year ahead, looking at RE within the context of the congregation;
6. Maintains contact with the DRE, board liaison and HR, and committee members;
7. Represents the RE Committee in public situations;
8. Recruits the next Chair;
9. Initiates special meetings and retreats as needed;
10. Initiates and maintains verbal and written contact with committee members between meetings;
11. Provides a report for the annual congregational meeting;
12. Schedules meetings through the church administrator (time and place).

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley
Children and Youth Religious Education Program

The Committee Secretary:

1. Takes notes during committee meetings;
2. Produces working minutes of each meeting including ongoing task list;
3. Sends minutes to committee members and DRE in a timely manner;
4. Maintains historical file of RE committee minutes;
5. Maintains updated RE Policy and Procedure manual;
6. Writes personal notes when appropriate; and
7. Keeps updated list of committee members and distributes to committee and board liaison.

Treasurer:

1. Prepares proposed annual budget, with DRE and committee
2. Monitors the annual budget;
3. Reports at each regular committee meeting;

Curriculum (3 months):

1. Work with DRE in reviewing new and current curriculum;
2. Present to the committee the choices for the coming academic year;
3. Keep up to date on available curriculum resources from the UUA and other appropriate resources.

Parent Communicator:

1. Prepare 'visitor packets' and have them available for Sunday RE Greeters;
2. Contact new families the week following their initial Sunday visit. Inquire how children felt about RE and answer questions;
3. Plan and assist DRE with parent orientation events.

Special Events:

1. Organize Teacher Appreciation Dinner;
2. Organize Parent Gatherings;
3. Assist DRE in Inter-Generational Services;
4. Assist DRE with Parent Sunday;
5. Recruit volunteers to help with special events.

Volunteer Teachers Job Description

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley

Children and Youth Religious Education Program

The following is a description of tasks and responsibilities of the Children & Youth Religious Education Volunteers and Youth Advisors.

Curriculum

The curriculum will be determined by the RE Committee and the Director of Religious Education (DRE). The curriculum will be chosen in order to meet the goals set forth by the committee. RE volunteers need to adhere to the curriculum philosophies. When in doubt, contact the DRE.

Teaching Schedules

There will always be **two RE volunteers** in the classroom. This is policy and therefore is not optional.

Each class will have a team of at least three RE volunteers. The team is responsible for its scheduling, with the help of the DRE.

Each teaching team will be given a calendar of teaching Sundays. The team will use this calendar to plan its weekly lessons. If there is a service that your class may benefit from attending, let the DRE know. The exception to this is the Preschool Class, which will always meet.

Substitutes

If team members cannot fill in for each other during absences, contact the parents of your students. If a substitute still cannot be found, contact the DRE who will either find a substitute for the class or dismiss the class.

Team Coordinator

Each team is responsible for choosing a "team coordinator". This can be a rotating position. The coordinator is the contact person for the team. For example: If the RE volunteers need to know something, the DRE will contact the Team Coordinator and that teacher will contact the rest of the RE volunteers on the team.

Supplies

The DRE will stock basic supplies at the beginning of the year. If supplies are running low or if you need something specific, please inform the DRE on the Green Sheet and notate the date needed. If you need something at the last minute, you are responsible for getting it. (You will be reimbursed if you keep the receipt.)

Snacks

The team will decide if snacks are something you want to offer. RE classroom volunteers, **NOT the DRE**, will be responsible for this. Peanuts and peanut products are not allowed as many children have life threatening allergies.

Attendance

Keep a weekly record of attendance (use Green Sheets) and place in the DRE's mailbox outside the office door at the end of each Sunday's RE session. This is important for statistics! .

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley

Children and Youth Religious Education Program

Clean Up

Weekly: RE volunteers are responsible for cleaning up the classroom after class. "Clean up" is defined as taking care of paper/craft scraps, plates, cups, supplies – not vacuuming or emptying the trash.

End of Year: RE volunteers are responsible for clearing the classroom space at the end of the year. Walls and bulletin boards should be cleared off and students' work should be sent home if possible.

Policies and Procedures

RE Volunteers will uphold the UUCSV policies and procedures for the Religious Education Program. You have been given a copy of the policies and procedures. If you have not received a copy, please contact the DRE.

Student Registration

All students MUST be registered in order to be in a classroom. Parents need to complete a Family Registration Form (front and back) which is found in the classroom notebook. RE volunteers are to return the registration form to the DRE immediately after class.

Visiting students also MUST have the Visitor Registration card filled out before they can participate in the class. If the card has not been filled out before the student comes to class, one of the volunteers must fill it out and return the card to the DRE immediately after class.

Classroom Placement

A student's classroom placement is determined by the RE Committee. A placement outside of the regular age grouping needs to be discussed and approved by the DRE and RE Committee.

Conflict

If there is unresolved conflict within the team or with a parent, the teacher needs to discuss this with the DRE. If the problem cannot be discussed with the DRE, the RE Committee Chairperson should be contacted.

If there is a problem, no matter how large or small you think it is, please report it using the Green Sheets supplied in each classroom. Anything making your class time less than enjoyable will be addressed by the DRE or RE Committee.

Green Sheets

The green sheets are a communication tool for volunteers to relay important information to the DRE weekly regarding attendance, special needs, upcoming activities or issues that need immediate attention. Please be sure to complete the form and put it in the DRE's mailbox located outside the administrative offices at the end of each Sunday's class. These forms should be completed by both classroom volunteers and youth advisors.

Volunteer Youth Advisor Job Description

PURPOSE: To coordinate Youth Program Activities, and provide support and

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley

Children and Youth Religious Education Program

guidance to the youth in grades 9 - 12.

Goal: To promote the spiritual growth and/or transformation of the youth of UUCSV. Youth advisors engage in a ministry with youth that emphasizes fun, religious identity, community, the democratic process, and service.

Statement of Accountability: As an advisor, you report to and are supported by the Director of Religious Education. Additional support comes from Minister and Religious Education Committee. You are ultimately responsible to the Board of Directors and to the congregation.

TIME FRAME: As an advisor, you commit to serving as a part of an advising team for at least one year. Advising teams divide up weekly responsibilities so that you will be with the youth approximately one in two Sundays. In addition, advisors typically participate in one to three weekend retreats, district conferences ("cons"), or youth/adult development conferences each year.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

- Commitment to the spiritual growth of youth, and the ability to see the inherent worth and dignity of every young person.
- Ability to work as a part of an advising team.
- Basic knowledge of what it means to be a religious liberal, a sense of your own liberal faith.
- Your own social and emotional support network.

RESPONSIBILITIES

PROGRAM (Youth and support):

- Nurture the spiritual growth and/or transformation of youth in cooperation with their parents/ guardians, and the rest of the church community.
- Assist and support youth leaders in planning and carrying out the youth program as set forth by the RE Committee.
- Collaborate with DRE and Minister to plan intergenerational or YRUU led worship services in the sanctuary.
- Help to motivate youth/adults to participate in activities
- Presence at youth group meetings and events.
- Attend to your own personal spiritual growth and/or transformation by attending worship services and other UUCSV programs.
- Have fun!

COVENANT RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Provide support and guidance to youth as needed, maintaining confidentiality unless there is a potential for injury to self or others or in situations where abuse is occurring or there is a potential for such.
- Seek supervision from DRE and Minister for all significant concerns.
- Solicit adequate parent volunteer supervision per guidelines, one adult to 10

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley

Children and Youth Religious Education Program

- youth for all events and at least 3 adults for any sleepover event.
- Secure permission slips and Behavioral Covenants for each youth attending trips and overnights.

ADMINISTRATIVE:

- Meet with DRE once a month.
- Apprise DRE of all plans and occurrences in youth groups
- Create/have youth create flyers for events and distribute to youth
- Maintain an up to date email list of our youth
- Make reservations/arrangements with places for events

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Read available literature and research internet resources on youth groups and advisor roles
- Attend youth advisor training opportunities when possible.

All volunteers who work with minors must agree to and sign the Code of Ethics Reference checks may be requested of volunteers working with minors.

CLASSROOM GUIDELINES

PLACEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

1. All students will be assigned to a classroom based on his/her age and grade. This placement generally ensures that the student will be exposed to the particular curriculum that most meets his/her needs and interests, as well as providing the student with the most appropriate peer group with which to relate. It also enables the RE committee to determine class size and materials needed for each group.
2. Changes to these assignments will be made only with the consent of the RE committee in consultation with the DRE, parents and the various RE volunteers involved.

VISITING THE CLASSROOM

1. All parents should feel free to visit their child's classroom, and, in fact, the RE committee encourages such visits.
2. The DRE and/or classroom RE volunteers reserve the right to limit these visits.
3. An exception to this policy would be in the case of a behavior problem that necessitates the long-term presence of the parent at the request of the RE volunteers or the DRE.

BEHAVIOR

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley

Children and Youth Religious Education Program

1. If a teaching team feels that a student is disruptive to their class, they should notify the DRE and complete an incident form for the disruptive behavior and note it on the Green Sheet.
2. Incident forms will be confidential and maintained by the DRE and released only on a "need to know" basis.
3. Incident forms shall be destroyed (shredded) at the end of each RE year or when the individual leaves the program.
4. The DRE, or designee, will visit the class to diagnose the problem and help the RE volunteers and parents develop a plan for addressing the problem behavior.
5. If the problem behavior continues, the parent will be required to come and stay with the student in the classroom until the behavior is modified.
6. If after implementing all of the above steps, the behavior of the student remains a problem, the RE committee may request that the parent remove the child from the program.
7. At the request of the parent, the student may be re-admitted to his/her class following consultation with the DRE and the RE Committee.
8. Because RE volunteers are volunteers, they should not be expected to handle severe behavior problems. Severe problems are defined as anything causing bodily harm (such as throwing things, hitting, kicking), property damage or abusive language. If severe behavior problems occur, the DRE and/or parent will be asked to immediately remove the student from the class until such time as the behavior can be addressed as outlined above.

**Note: "Parent" denotes either parent or guardian.*

SAFETY POLICIES

INTRODUCTION

These policies have been developed to minimize the risk, to the greatest degree possible, that any student involved in a UUCSV activity will be harmed or abused. We sincerely hope that their establishment and implementation will be a source of security for the students, their parents, and the adult volunteers that are a part of our RE program.

FIRE SAFETY

1. There are two (2) fire extinguishers in the part of the church designated for RE Programs. One is located at the south end of the RE wing, the other is located at the north end of the hall by the offices.
2. RE volunteers **should not** attempt to fight a fire. Their first and only responsibility, in case of fire, is to get the students to safety.

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley

Children and Youth Religious Education Program

3. In case of fire RE volunteers should calmly and quickly escort the students out of the building and proceed to the designated "meeting place". One RE volunteer from each classroom should lead his/her students single file while the other RE volunteer follows the last student out. If the fire alarm is not sounding, pull the one located at the nearest exit.

Classes in the RE wing use the South exit at the end of RE wing.
Classes in the Library will use the North exit by the offices.

4. The designated "Meeting Place" is the NORTH parking lot. Once everyone has reached the "Meeting Place", the RE volunteers should wait there with the students until their parents come for them. Parents are not to leave the property with their students until they have checked in with their child's teacher. Be sure to check your roster and verify that all children are out of the building.

Fire alarms and exits are illuminated.

Parent responsibility – meet the students at the "Meeting place", do not go to the classrooms.

FIRST AID

1. A complete first aid kit is located in the supply cabinets in hallway and in the Senior Youth Classroom.
2. In a true life-threatening emergency, one RE volunteer should call 911 while the other RE volunteer stays with the sick or injured student. Church address is posted in each classroom and by each phone.
3. The DRE and the parents of an ill or injured student should immediately be located by one of the RE volunteers.
4. If immediate medical help seems necessary or advisable, interrupt the service and ask if there is a doctor or nurse available to assist.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

Recruitment

1. All volunteers must reveal past related experience, criminal history, and references. No person with a history of crimes or abuse involving children will be eligible to supervise minors. Sexual offender and abuse background checks are performed. A *Code of Ethics and Safety Policy Agreement* will be read and signed by each volunteer.
2. All volunteers will be interviewed by the DRE and/or the RE Committee chairperson.

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley

Children and Youth Religious Education Program

3. All references may be checked and documented by the RE Committee.

Safety Policy

1. There will be **two adults** in each area with the students at all times during RE Program hours. The DRE (or designee) is responsible for monitoring classes and providing additional adults, combining classes, or dismissing classes as necessary to assure appropriate coverage.
2. RE volunteers are responsible for students only during RE program times.
3. As a general rule, **adults should let the students** initiate expressions of physical affection, such as hugs or lap sitting. Expressions of affection that are generally thought of as appropriate in the family setting, such as kissing and back rubs should **not** occur in the church arena between students and unrelated adults.
4. Any suspected misconduct by RE volunteers or any other volunteer working under the auspices of the UUCSV Religious Education Department will be reported to the DRE or to the minister. The minister or DRE will investigate these suspicions expediently and fairly with respect for the privacy of the individuals involved. Where sufficient cause exists, reports will be made to the appropriate authorities as required by Virginia law.
5. If an RE volunteer suspects abuse the same procedure should be followed as above.

FIELD TRIPS

1. The DRE must approve all field trips involving UUCSV students.
2. There must be a field trip permission form signed by the parent of every student attending, regardless of age.
3. The adult/child ratio on field trips must meet the following guidelines:
 - a. Preschool 1:4
 - b. Grades K-2 1:6
 - c. Grades 3-5 1:8
 - d. Grades 6-12 1:10

There must be a minimum of 2 adults per group.

4. **All drivers must be at least 21 years of age, licensed and covered by car insurance. Current Virginia child safety laws apply with the exception that everyone, including adults must be fastened in a seat belt.**

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Shenandoah Valley

Children and Youth Religious Education Program

5. Parents should meet at a specified place after the trip. Two adults will wait with the students until they all are picked up.

OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIPS

1. The DRE must approve all overnights involving UUCSV students.
2. An overnight permission form must be signed by the parent for every student attending, regardless of age.
3. The adult/child ratio will be the same as for field trips.
4. For mixed gendered groups, there will be both male and female chaperones. There should be two adult chaperones awake all night, taking shifts if necessary.
5. Once students arrive at the overnight location, they will not leave unless accompanied by their parent.
6. Students will be released only to their parents unless other advance arrangements have been made in writing by the parent. Students who drive may leave only at the ending time of the activity unless they have a release form or note signed by their parent.

RULES

No possession or use of illegal drugs
No shared sleeping covers
No weapons of violence
No tobacco products
No leaving grounds
No sexual activity
No alcohol
No visitors
NO means NO

Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement weather that may affect Children and Youth Religious Education classes and activities, please listen to the radio station WINC 92.5 FM after 9:00am, or **better yet, check their website WINC.FM for cancellation information**. While it is probable that the regular 11:00am service will be held as usual, RE classes may not be. That decision will be made by 9:00am and the radio station will be notified. Please be sure to tune in and listen to all cancellations carefully as announcements are usually made in alphabetical order and we're down there quite a ways.