



# Assessing Sexual Health:

An Online Guide For UUA Congregations

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# ASSESSING SEXUAL HEALTH: AN ONLINE GUIDE FOR UUA CONGREGATIONS

By  
Rev. Debra W. Haffner

## INTRODUCTION

The Unitarian Universalist Association has a long standing commitment to be a sexually healthy and responsible denomination. During the past three years, the UUA has been working with the Religious Institute, a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing sexual health, sexuality education, and sexual justice in America's faith communities. The Religious Institute published [\*Toward a Sexually Healthy and Responsible UUA\*](#) in 2009, and recommended that congregations receive additional information and assistance on how to create sexuality policies and programs.

A sexually healthy congregation promotes the integration of sexuality and spirituality in worship, preaching, pastoral care, children, youth, and adult religious education, and social action programs in the community. It makes a commitment to a sexual ethic that is not based on double standards and understands that dealing with sexuality is an issue of spiritual wholeness. It is a congregation that addresses sexuality openly and holistically.

A sexually healthy and responsible Unitarian Universalist congregation has nine central building blocks.

- Congregation policies and procedures which support these goals, including visible signals that this is a congregation that addresses sexuality issues openly and justly
- Sexually healthy religious professionals with training and experience in sexuality issues
- Worship and preaching periodically on sexuality issues
- Pastoral care on a wide range of sexuality issues
- Sexuality education for children and youth
- Sexuality education and support for adults
- Welcome and full inclusion for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals and families with LGBT members
- A commitment against sexual exploitation of all kinds, including sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual misconduct by staff and clergy
- Social Action Efforts for Sexual Justice in Society

This online assessment tool can be used by the ministerial and/or lay leadership of the congregation to identify both the strengths and areas where there is a need for improvement on sexuality issues. It provides an opportunity for planning on how to address each of the areas thoroughly and comprehensively. It includes links to other online resources that may help a Congregation improve their policies, procedures, and programs. It is not expected that any congregation will do *all* of these activities or have *all* of these policies but rather that these items represent best practice for congregations to consider.

There are a number of ways that a congregation or clergy person can use this online assessment. UU ministers do not need permission to obtain additional training in sexuality issues or to preach about a sexuality topic. Other areas, such as developing a new safe congregation's policy or an adult sexual education program, may need the support of the board or key lay committees. Not all of these suggestions will make sense in every community; take what is useful and discard what is not.

Some UU congregations have developed a steering committee on sexuality issues to conduct an overall assessment and develop an overall plan to address the sexual health of the community. Others divide up the assessment to the relevant staff professional or congregation committee which creates its own plan. Others have had the board create its own subcommittee.

Ultimately, a commitment to developing a sexually healthy faith community needs to permeate every aspect of a community. It is not enough to offer OWL to our middle school students and go through a Welcoming Congregation Program once. Instead, UU ministers, religious educators, the Board, key committee members, youth, and parents must share the commitment to sexual and spiritual wholeness. We are called as Unitarian Universalist communities to promote sexual morality, justice, and healing. This online guide will assist in that process.

The Religious Institute is available to provide intensive technical assistance and training to congregations, districts, and UUA professional groups as their work on implementing or improving their plans as a sexually healthy and responsible congregation. Please direct your inquiries to [info@religiousinstitute.org](mailto:info@religiousinstitute.org)

This online assessment was developed by Rev. Debra W. Haffner, and reviewed by the following members of the UUA staff Rev. Terasa Cooley, Rev. Judith Friediani, Rev. Harlan Limpert, Rev. Sarah Lammert, Alex Kapitan, Kay Montgomery, Robert Molla, John Hurley, Rev. Craig Roshaven, and Rev. Ned Wight. We are grateful for their review. I am also grateful to Blanca Godoi for her careful preparation and research for this publication. The development of the online assessment guide was funded by the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock

## Building Block #1

### CONGREGATION POLICIES AND ENVIRONMENT

There are many ways that a congregation signals its commitment to be a sexually healthy and responsible faith community. These include policies, by-laws, membership materials, the congregation website, the newsletter, and the physical environment.

These assessment questions can be completed separately by:

- Congregational Administrator
- Minister
- Chair of Board of Trustees

		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do your bylaws address...	anti-discrimination on sexual orientation?				
	full inclusion on sexual orientation?				
	anti-discrimination on gender identity and expression?				
	full inclusion on gender identity and expression?				
	gender equity?				
	sexual harassment?				
	inclusive language in worship and education?				
	family diversity?				

		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do your hiring practices address...	anti-discrimination on sexual orientation?				
	full inclusion on sexual orientation?				
	anti-discrimination on gender identity and expression?				
	full inclusion on gender identity and expression?				
	gender equity?				
	sexual harassment?				
	inclusive language in worship and education?				
	family diversity?				
		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do your personnel policies address...	anti-discrimination on sexual orientation?				
	full inclusion on sexual orientation?				
	anti-discrimination on gender identity/expression?				
	full inclusion on gender identity/expression?				
	gender equity?				
	sexual harassment?				
	inclusive language?				
	family diversity?				

		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Does the bulletin periodically include info on...	anti-discrimination on sexual orientation?				
	full inclusion on sexual orientation?				
	anti-discrimination on gender identity/expression?				
	full inclusion on gender identity?				
	gender equity?				
	sexual harassment?				
	inclusive language?				
	family diversity?				
		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Does the web site include info on...	anti-discrimination on sexual orientation?				
	full inclusion on sexual orientation?				
	anti-discrimination on gender identity/expression?				
	full inclusion on gender identity?				
	gender equity?				
	sexual harassment?				
	inclusive language?				
	family diversity?				
		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Does the membership packet include info on...	anti-discrimination on sexual orientation?				
	full inclusion on sexual orientation?				
	anti-discrimination on gender identity/expression?				
	gender equity?				
	sexual harassment?				
	inclusive language?				
	family diversity?				

<b>Inclusive Language</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>	<b>Plans for improvement</b>
<p>Are there guidelines encouraging full inclusion language that is given to all worship coordinators and speakers, bulletin and website editors, and membership leaders and greeters?</p> <p>Does it include mindfulness around:</p>	Diverse family formation?				
	Heterosexist language (e.g., Partner vs. Husband/Wife/ Spouse)?				
	Difference between sexual orientation and gender identity?				
	Representation of a variety of sexual orientations and gender identities in stories, etc.?				
	Non-gendered words used for divine?				
	Words that encompass all genders rather than only two (e.g., "people" instead of "women and men"; "siblings" instead of "brothers and sisters")?				
<b>Staff and Volunteers</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Plans for Improvement</b>
Is there a yearly analysis of the composition of the staff and Board of Trustees?					
Does the analysis address sex, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, ability/disability, race, ethnicity and culture?					
Are active attempts made to assure diversity in hiring and elections?					

Library		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Is there a church library?					
If yes;  Does it include prominently displayed books on:	Sexuality education for children?				
	Sexuality education for teens?				
	Sexuality Issues for Single adults?				
	Sexuality Issues for Couples?				
	Marriage and Family Resources?				
	LGBT resources?				
	Guides for parents/guardians on talking about sexuality issues?				
Referrals		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Is there information about community referral sources on these sexuality issues posted on the bulletin board or available as pamphlets in the foyer or meeting space:	Abuse survivors?				
	Adoption?				
	Cancer support groups?				
	HIV/AIDS support groups?				
	Coming out?				
	Family planning?				
	Infertility?				
	LGBT issues?				
	Pregnancy counseling?				
	Rape survivors?				
	Sex therapy?				

#### SUGGESTED READINGS:

- [A Time to Build](#), Religious Institute, Revised 2012
- Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Human Resources Employee Manual, 2010 Update
- [Model Personnel Policy Manual for Congregations](#)

#### FOR MORE ASSISTANCE:

- Office of Congregational Life, UUA  
**Heather Adams Bond**  
Manager of Congregational Life Administration  
(617) 948-4370  
[safecongregations@uua.org](mailto:safecongregations@uua.org)
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## Building Block #2

# SEXUALLY HEALTHY RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONALS

The most important building block for a sexually healthy congregation is a staff of sexually healthy and responsible religious professionals. Sexually healthy religious professionals – clergy, religious educators, youth advisors, and pastoral counselors – are comfortable with their own sexuality, have skills to provide pastoral care and worship on sexuality issues, maintain professional boundaries and avoid misconduct, and are committed to sexual justice in the congregation and the society at large. Some of these issues will be covered in future sections in more depth as well.

These assessment questions can be completed by:

- Congregation Minister(s)
- Director of Religious Education
- Youth Minister/Director
- Committee on Ministry or Personnel Committee Chair may choose to review the answers to these questions to assess the level of training/background of the religious professionals in the congregation

Courses		Yes	No	Plans for Improvement
Have you taken a graduate level course on human sexuality?				
Have you taken a course on avoiding professional sexual misconduct?				
Have you taken a course on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace or congregation?				
Workshops		Yes	No	Plans for Improvement
Have you participated in a workshop on being a sexually healthy religious professional at:	Center Days?			
	Local UUMA Chapter Event?			
	Local LREDA Chapter Event?			
	District events?			
	General Assembly?			

Personal Attributes		Yes	No	N/A to My Role	Plans for Improvement
Have you worked with a trained counselor on issues related to your own personal sexual history, particularly if you have a history of sexual abuse, incest, or other cases where your sexuality was exploited?					
Have you undertaken theological reflection on the integration of sexuality and spirituality?					
Are you familiar with the UUMA or LREDA code of conduct on sexual behaviors for UU religious professionals?					
Do you know the warning signs for sexual attraction to a congregant?					
Do you have a relationship with a spiritual director, therapist, or more senior ministerial colleague for assistance in dealing with sexuality issues and attractions that may arise?					
Do you have overall understanding of what the Hebrew Bible, Christian Scripture, Koran and other sacred texts say about sexuality issues?					
		Yes	No	Plans for Improvement	
Do you know the UUA's current policies on:	Abortion?				
	Adolescent Sexuality?				
	Safe Congregations?				
	Have you read the Our Whole Lives Curricula?				
	Have you attended an Our Whole Lives training course?				
	Have you endorsed the Religious Declaration on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing?				

#### SUGGESTED READINGS:

- [A Time to Build](#), Religious Institute, Revised 2012
- [Sex and the Seminary](#): Preparing Ministers for Sexual Health and Justice, Religious Institute, 2009
- [Sexuality and the Sacred](#): *Sources for Theological Reflection*, ed. Marvin Ellison and Kelly Brown Douglas, Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.

#### FOR MORE ASSISTANCE:

Religious Institute “Sexuality Issues for UUA Religious Professionals” Online Course—12 session course available to ministerial candidates, UU fellowshiped clergy, Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) members, Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) professional staff members, and staff directors of religious education. [Enroll online](#).

## **Building Block #3**

### **WORSHIP AND PREACHING**

Sexuality issues can be addressed from the pulpit and in worship. Most UU clergy have preached on some sexuality issues, especially about gay and lesbian issues and marriage equality. Many UU clergy have participated with the Religious Institute in our Rachel and Congo Sabbath Initiatives. However, many congregations miss the opportunity to regularly integrate these issues into worship, and few have ever addressed such issues as sexual abuse prevention, sexuality education, or reproductive justice. Preaching and worship about sexuality issues can help congregants understand the relationship of sexuality and spirituality; that sexuality can be discussed in a respectful and serious manner; and that the UUA has a prophetic voice on sexuality issues. Further, addressing sexuality issues during worship and sermons demonstrates that clergy are comfortable talking about sexuality issues and therefore open to addressing these issues in pastoral care as well.

To be completed by:

- Congregation Minister(s)
- Director of Religious Education
- Worship Committee of the Congregation

		Worship		Sermon		Plans for improvement
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
During the past two years, has there been a worship service or has someone preached on:	Any sexuality issue?					
	Welcome and full inclusion of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals and families with lesbian, gay, or bisexual members?					
	Welcome and full inclusion of transgender and gender variant individuals, and families with a transgender or gender variant member?					
	Lesbian, gay, and bisexual justice issue, such as marriage equality?					
	Transgender justice issue, such as nondiscrimination legislation?					
	LGBT youth justice issue, such as bullying or homelessness?					
	Reproductive justice, including abortion and family planning?					
	Sexuality Education?					
	Global Maternal Mortality? (Rachel Sabbath)					
	International Violence Against? Women (Congo Sabbath)					
	Domestic Violence?					
	Sexual Abuse?					
Other Sexuality Issue?						
<b>Inclusive Language</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Plans for Improvement</b>	
Are there guidelines encouraging full inclusion language for worship and preaching? (see Policies and Environment section for more detail)						

Commemorations		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Are special dates acknowledged at worship services near:	January 22, the anniversary of the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision on abortion?				
	February 14, National Standing on the Side of Love Day?				
	March, Women's History Month? (International Women's Day, March 8)				
	April, Prevent Child Abuse Month?				
	May, National Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Month?				
	Mother's Day or Father's Day? (Sundays can become "wholly family services" which celebrate families of all kinds)				
	Rachel Sabbath Initiative? (Maternal Health)				
	June, Gay and Lesbian Pride Month?				
	July 11, World Population Day?				
	August 26, Women's Equality Day?				
	September, Comprehensive Sexuality Education?				
	October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month?				
	October 11, National Coming Out Day?				
	November, Family Caregivers Month?				
	November 20, Transgender Day of Remembrance?				
	December 1, World AIDS Day?				
	December 10, Human Rights Day?				
	Anniversary of Congregation Becoming a Welcoming Congregation?				

		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
In the past two years, have there been services or public acknowledgements at a worship service about sexuality-related life events?	Abuse survivors?				
	Adoption or co-parent adoption?				
	Baby naming?				
	Croning?				
	Divorces?				
	Marriages and commitment ceremonies?				
	People lost to AIDS?				
	Pregnancy Loss?				
		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
In the past two years, has there been:	Sermon on sexuality issues?				
	Readings on sexuality issues?				
	Rite of passage ceremony?				
	Celebrations of announcement of a pregnancy, birth, or adoption?				
	Celebrations of announcement of an engagement, marriage, or union?				
	Rituals of celebration for coming out?				
	Rituals of celebration to mark transition milestone for transgender individuals?				
		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Has the congregation participated in:	National Standing on Side of Love Day (February 14)				
	Congo Sabbath?				
	Rachel Sabbath?				
		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Does the Music Director have hymns available for sexuality-related services?					

#### SUGGESTED READINGS:

- [A Time for Every Purpose](#), Religious Institute, 2009, has Responsive Readings on the following topics: Sex Education, Abortion as a Moral Decision, Adolescent Sexuality, Assisted Reproductive Technologies, Marriage Equality, and Sexual and Gender Diversity
- [The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible](#), by David Carr, Oxford University Press, 2003.
- [The Sins of Scripture: Exposing the Bible's Texts of Hate to Reveal the Love of God](#), by John Spong, HarperCollins, 2005
- [When Bodies and Souls Entwine](#), A hymn written for the 10th Anniversary of the Religious Institute

#### FOR MORE ASSISTANCE:

- [Religious Institute](#)
- [Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice](#)
- [Jewish Mosaic](#)
- [Torah Queeries](#)
- [UUA WorshipWeb](#)
- [UUA Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender \(LGBT\) Ministries](#)

## **Building Block #4**

### **PASTORAL CARE**

Clergy and other pastoral care providers must be prepared and skilled in handling the sexuality-related needs of their congregants. The Religious Institute has identified more than one hundred sexuality concerns that congregants might bring, ranging from couples struggling with sexual dysfunction, infertility, or marital issues; people coming out as lesbian, gay, or bisexual; families dealing with the news of a teenage pregnancy or Internet affair; people trying to overcome a legacy of childhood physical or sexual abuse, and so on. Every clergy and chaplain can think of times that sexuality issues have been raised in their private offices. Clergy need special training to deal with these pastoral care issues; congregants need to feel comfortable raising these issues with their clergy; and there needs to be an active referral network for those congregants who need more assistance.

To be completed by:

- Congregation Minister(s)
- Lay Pastoral Care Providers
- Care Committee Chairs
- Small Group Ministries Facilitators

Reporting requirements		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do you know the state law about when clergy must violate confidentiality to:	Prevent a crime?				
	Report a crime?				
	Report child abuse?				
	Report child pornography use?				
	Protect someone from suicide?				
Training		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Have you had training on counseling on sexuality issues in general?					
Have you had training on premarital counseling?					
Have you had training on working with couples with relationship issues?					
Have you had training in divorce mediation?					
Have you taken a course on pregnancy options counseling?					
Have you taken a course on working with sexual abuse survivors?					
Do you know the PLISSIT model?					

		Yes	No	Feel comfortable without additional training	Plans for Improvement
Have you had specialized training in these areas:	Adolescents?				
	Bisexual adults?				
	Couples counseling?				
	Couples affected by infidelity?				
	Couples during pre-marital counseling?				
	Couples struggling with infertility or ART's?				
	Disabled persons?				
	Intersex individuals and families with an intersex child?				
	Families with gender variant children?				
	Families with LGB children/grandchildren and families with LGB parents/grandparents?				
	Gay and lesbian adults?				
	People involved in alternative sexual communities? (i.e., kink, bdsm, online role playing)				
	People with cognitive disabilities?				
	People with HIV/AIDS?				
	People with mental health issues?				
	Polyamorous individuals/families?				
	Transgender adults?				
	Young adults 18 - 24?				
	LGBT youth?				
	Survivors of sexual abuse and/or domestic violence/sexual assault?				
	Persons convicted of sexual offenses?				

		Yes	No	Plans for Improvement
Do you have up-to-date reading lists to give to congregants on these topics:	Adolescence?			
	Bisexuality?			
	Couples Enrichment?			
	Infertility or ART's?			
	Sexuality and Disabilities?			
	Intersex			
	Gender variant children?			
	LGBT issues?			
	Alternative Sexual Communities? (i.e., kink, bdsm, online role playing)			
	HIV/AIDS?			
	Polyamory?			
	Transgender			
	LGBT youth?			
	Sexual abuse and domestic violence/sexual assault?			

		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do you have outside experts for referrals for:	Adolescents?				
	Bisexual adults?				
	Couples Affected by Infidelity?				
	Couples during pre-marital counseling?				
	Couples struggling with infertility or ART's?				
	Disabled persons?				
	Intersex individuals, including families with an intersex child?				
	Families with gender variant children?				
	Families with LGBT children?				
	Gay and lesbian adults?				
	People involved in alternative sexual communities? (i.e., kink, bdsm, online role playing)				
	People with cognitive disabilities?				
	People with HIV/AIDS?				
	People with mental health issues?				
	Polyamorous individuals/families?				
	Transgender adults?				
	Young adults 18 - 24?				
	Couples?				
	LGBT youth?				
	Survivors of sexual abuse and/or domestic violence/sexual assault?				
	Sexual offenders?				

Referral Lists/ Networks / Network		Yes	No	Plans for Improvement
Does your referral list include:	Certified Marriage and family therapists?			
	Certified Sexuality counselors and therapists?			
	Sex Abuse Treatment Specialists?			

#### SUGGESTED READINGS:

- [A Time to Build](#), 2nd Edition, by Debra W. Haffner, Religious Institute, 2012
- *Counseling on Sexuality Issues: A Handbook for Pastors and Other Helping Professionals* by Andrew J. Weaver, John D. Preston, and Charlene A. Hosenfeld, Pilgrim Press, 2005
- *Ministry Among God's Queer Folk: LGBT Pastoral Care*, by David Kundtz and Bernard Schlager, Pilgrim Press, 2007
- Unitarian Universalist Association ([UUA](#)) [Guide on Marrying Same Sex Couples \(PDF, 31 pages\)](#)
- [UUA Premarital Counseling Guide for Same Gender Couples \(PDF, 18 pages\)](#)
- [UUA Resources on Transgender Identity and Inclusion](#)

#### FOR MORE ASSISTANCE:

- [American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists](#) for a list of certified sexuality counselors and therapists in your state
- [Association on Marriage and Family Therapists](#)
- [UUA Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender \(LGBT\) Ministries](#)

## HOTLINES FOR REFERRALS

- American Social Health Association's Sexually Transmitted Infections Resource Center Hotline  
Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 8 p.m., EST  
Phone: (800) 227-8922
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National AIDS Clearinghouse  
Hours: Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m., EST  
Phone: (800) 458-5231 TTY: 1 (800) 243-1098
- Domestic Violence Hotline  
Hours: 24 Hours  
Phone: (800) 799-SAFE (7233)
- [Emergency Contraception Hotline](#)  
Hours: 24 Hours  
Phone: (888) NOT-2-LATE ((888) 668-25283)
- [National Abortion Federation](#)—Abortion Information, Funding Assistance  
Hours: Monday - Friday, 7:00 a.m. - 11:00p.m., Saturday - Sunday, 9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.  
Phone: (800) 772-9100
- [National Abortion Federation](#)—Referrals  
Hours: Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 9:00p.m.; Saturday-Sunday, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
Phone: (877) 257-0012
- National Child Abuse Hotline  
Hours: 24 Hours  
Phone: (800) 4A-CHILD
- National Gay and Lesbian Hotline  
Hours: Monday-Friday, 4 p.m. - 12 am; Saturday, 12 p.m. - 5 p.m., EST  
Phone: (888) 843-4564
- National HIV/AIDS Teen Hotline, "From One Teen to Another" American Red Cross  
Hours: Friday and Saturday, 6 p.m. - 12 a.m., EST  
Phone: (800) 440-TEEN
- [Planned Parenthood Federation of America](#)  
Phone: (800) 230-PLAN
- Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN): National Sexual Assault Hotline  
Hours: 24 Hours  
Phone: (800) 656-HOPE  
[RAINN Online Hotline](#)
- [RESOLVE](#): The National Infertility Association  
Phone: (703) 556-7172
- Stop it Now! (Preventing Child Sexual Abuse)  
Hours: Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Phone: (888) PREVENT
- Teens Teaching AIDS Prevention (TTAP) National Hotline  
Hours: Monday - Friday, 4 p.m. - 8 p.m., CST  
Phone: (800) 234-TEEN
- The Trevor Project: Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Services for LGBTQ Youth  
Hours: 24 Hours  
Phone: (866) 4-U-TREVOR  
[Trevor Project Live Online Chat](#)

## Building Block #5

# SEXUALITY EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The UUA and UCC's "Our Whole Lives" program is the most comprehensive lifespan sexuality education curricula currently available. More than two thirds of UU congregations teach OWL at the middle and/or high school level, but many have not fully implemented the program. Further, support for OWL educators is often limited, and sexuality education often only includes OWL and misses other opportunities for educating children and youth about our values about sexuality.

To be completed by:

- Director of Religious Education
- Youth Minister/Director
- Chair(s), Religious Education Committee

Our Whole Lives Curricula		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Is OWL/sexuality education offered for:	Parents/guardians?				
	K - 1?				
	4 - 6?				
	Middle School?				
	High School?				
	Have all OWL/sexuality educators received the OWL required training?				
If OWL is offered at any level		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Are the OWL/sexuality educators observed at least annually by a professional sexuality educator?					
Are the OWL educators on the OWL email list?					
		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do you have the complete set of OWL curricula and the faith guides available for:	Director of Religious Education?				
	Trained Volunteers?				
	Review by parents/guardians of children taking the program?				

		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do the educators have access to a professional sexuality educator for supervision and consultation?					
Do the OWL teachers attend at least an annual update on sexuality issues at a local conference or workshop?					
Does the minister meet with the parents/guardians of the children and youth participating in OWL?					
Has the minister taken the OWL training?					
Does the minister meet with the students taking OWL to talk about UU values and sexual decision making?					
DRE and OWL		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Has the director of religious education taken the OWL training?					
OWL orientation for parents/guardians?					
OWL orientation for middle schoolers?					
OWL orientation for young adults?					
Does the director of religious education have regular check ins with the OWL facilitators?					
Youth group		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Is the youth group divided by developmental ages:	Middle School?				
	Early High School?				
	Late High School?				

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do all youth leaders sign and abide by the UUA Code of Ethics for working with young people?				
Do youth leaders know the laws about consent in your state?				
Are youth educated annually about the laws of consent in your state?				
Is there a support group for LGBT teens?				
Is there a gay/straight church alliance?				
Are guidelines for teen sexual and romantic interactions developed each year by the youth group?				
Are these guidelines prominently displayed in the youth group space?				
Do you know what the UUA means by the Third Option for sexuality issues for youth?				
Are there pamphlets about local sexual health services available in the space that youth meet?				
	Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do youth centered or youth led worship services or education sessions or retreats periodically focus on such sexuality related issues as:	Peer Pressure?			
	Sexual and gender identity?			
	Relationships with friends?			
	Relationships with parents/guardians?			
	Safe Internet use?			
	Sexual Limit Setting?			
	Abstinence and Safer Sex?			
Parents/Guardians	Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Is there a session for parents/guardians with leaders before OWL/sexuality education is taught?				
Is written permission from parents/guardians required for OWL K - 12?				
Does the program regularly include homework assignments between parents/guardians and children?				

Community involvement	Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Does the director of religious education have relationships with local youth support agencies for referrals?				
Are there opportunities for youth to volunteer at local community groups that address sexuality issues, such as a local family planning center, AIDS organization, LGBT organization?				

#### SUGGESTED READINGS:

- [A Time to Speak](#): Faith Communities and Sexuality Education, Third Edition, Religious Institute, 2011
- [Our Whole Lives](#) is a series of sexuality education curricula for six age groups: [grades K-1](#), [grades 4-6](#), [grades 7-9](#), [grades 10-12](#), [young adults \(ages 18-35\)](#), and [adults](#).

#### FOR MORE ASSISTANCE:

- Contact **Melanie Davis**  
*Our Whole Lives* Program Associate  
Ministries and Faith Development  
(908) 722-1632  
[owl@uua.org](mailto:owl@uua.org)
- [American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists](#)
- [Advocates for Youth](#)
- [Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States](#) (SIECUS)
- [Sex, Etc.](#)

## Building Block #6

# SEXUALITY EDUCATION FOR ADULTS

Few UU congregations offer either the adult or the young adult OWL program, and even fewer have trained facilitators. But, there are many other ways that congregations can support sexuality education and information for the adults in their congregation.

To be completed by:

- Congregation Minister(s)
- Director of Religious Education
- Adult Education/Lifespan Education Chair

<b><i>Our Whole Lives (OWL)</i></b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Plans for Improvement</b>
Is Adult OWL offered?				
Is Young Adult OWL offered?				
<b>Adult Education Programs</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Plans for Improvement</b>
Are there marriage/couple enrichment programs offered for adults?				
Do you offer an annual workshop for parents/guardians on talking to their children and teens about sexuality issues?				
Is there a periodic adult education offering on sexuality in midlife?				
Is there a periodical adult education offering on sexuality over 65?				
Are there book groups that address books with sexuality topics?				
Are there film or DVD groups that address movies with sexuality topics?				
Are there books in the congregation library on adult sexuality?				
Are there pamphlets about sexuality issues and local sexuality organizations in the pamphlet racks?				
Is there a singles group for lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults?				
Is there a singles group for heterosexual and bisexual adults?				

		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Are there support groups for adults facing:	Sexual abuse (past and/or present)?				
	Domestic violence/sexual assault (past and/or present)?				
	Divorce?				
	Death of a partner?				
	Coming out?				
	Transitioning?				
	Issues around having an LGB or transgender/gender variant child?				

#### SUGGESTED READINGS:

- [Adult OWL](#)
- [Young Adult OWL](#)

#### FOR MORE ASSISTANCE:

- Contact **Melanie Davis**  
*Our Whole Lives* Program Associate  
Ministries and Faith Development  
(908) 722-1632  
[owl@uua.org](mailto:owl@uua.org)
- [American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists](#)
- [Sexuality and Aging Consortium at Widener University](#)

## **Building Block #7**

### **WELCOME AND FULL INCLUSION**

The UUA began its commitment to being a community that welcomed and affirmed gay, lesbian, and bisexual people as early as 1987, and in 1990 it published the first version of “The Welcoming Congregation Handbook.” Since that time, there have been expanded efforts to fully include LGBT people, with almost 700 congregations having gone through a Welcoming Congregation process and receiving recognition from the UUA. However, many congregations have done little to address the needs of bisexual and transgender persons, few address the needs of LGBT youth, and a majority does not have a committee or task force with responsibilities for this area.

The inclusive congregation creates an environment where LGBT persons and families with LGBT members feel integrated within the congregation; are comfortable worshipping together and showing affection to one another; feel comfortable speaking freely about their sexual orientation, gender identity, and other aspects of their lives and experience; know they and their children can come to their clergy and youth leaders for compassionate, informed pastoral care and do not hesitate to invite other LGBT people to worship services and congregational activities; “see” themselves as active members of the community; and “hear” their lives and issues addressed in congregational worship, preaching, and teaching.

#### **To be completed by:**

- Congregation Minister(s)
- Social Justice Chair
- Chair/Members of the Welcoming Congregation Committee/ Rainbow Task Force

<b>Welcoming Congregation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Plans for Improvement</b>
Are we recognized by the UUA as a <a href="#">Welcoming Congregation</a> ?				
If we were recognized as a Welcoming Congregation more than 5 years ago, have we re-engaged by doing a refresher course or using <a href="#">Living the Welcoming Congregation</a> ?				
Has our Welcoming Congregation work included education around transgender issues, bisexual issues, and issues of race/ethnicity and sexuality?				
Do we have an active Welcoming Congregation Committee or Rainbow Task Force that meets regularly and is visible in the congregation, and/or is work around LGBT welcome, inclusion, and advocacy an intentional part of our social justice committee?				
<b>Worship</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Plans for Improvement</b>
Do we provide opportunities for openly LGBT persons (both lay members and clergy) to participate and lead worship?				
Do we publish a <a href="#">statement of welcome</a> in the worship program or bulletin that specifically names LGBT persons?				
Do we respectfully name openly LGBT congregants and raise LGBT issues and concerns in congregational prayers?				
Do we explicitly address issues relevant to LGBT congregants (e.g., marriage equality, nondiscrimination legislation, adoption rights, ordination, and other denominational issues) in sermons, education, and social action?				
Do we include LGBT people and families in all rites provided for other congregants, such as marriages/commitment ceremonies, baptisms, naming ceremonies, confirmations, and funerals?				
Do we challenge scriptural interpretations and religious doctrines that denigrate women, proscribe homosexuality, and promote heterosexism?				

Rituals		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do we create rituals, prayers, or other ways to acknowledge important events in the lives of LGBT congregants, such as:	A congregant's decision to come as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender				
	A congregant's decision to begin gender transition				
	The celebration of land marks in a congregant's gender identity journey, such as a name change				
	The celebration of a same-sex couple's anniversary (regardless of whether it is a "wedding" anniversary)				
	The celebration of the adoption or co-parent adoption of a child				
	Healing service or prayers for LGBT congregants who have suffered from legalized discrimination, such as denial of marriage or adoption rights, dismissal from military service, or being fired from a job because of being transgender				
	Observance of <a href="#">Freedom to Marry Week</a> (February) in worship service				
	Observance of <a href="#">LGBT Pride Month</a> in worship service				
	Observance of <a href="#">National Coming Out Day</a> (Oct. 11) in worship service				
	Observance of <a href="#">Transgender Day of Remembrance</a> (Nov. 20) in worship service				

<b>Education, Visibility and Congregational Life</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Plans for Improvement</b>
Do we invite guest speakers to address LGBT social concerns, such as marriage and adoption rights for same-sex couples, nondiscrimination legislation, and bullying and homelessness among LGBT youth in our community?				
Do we integrate stories of LGBT lives and the pastoral concerns of LGBT people in our ongoing youth and adult education programs?				
Do we ensure that LGBT individuals and families with LGBT members are recognized and listed as they desire in directories and other publications?				
Do we prominently display a rainbow flag on a regular basis?				
Do we make our facilities available for use by LGBT congregational groups as well as LGBT community groups, such as <a href="#">Parents, Families, &amp; Friends of Lesbians and Gays</a> , <a href="#">Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network</a> and <a href="#">COLAGE: People with a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer Parent</a> ?				
Do we provide at least one gender-neutral, ADA-accessible restroom, labeled as such? Do we have signs directing people to that restroom?				
Do we provide sensitivity training in pastoral care to LGBT congregants for clergy, lay leaders, and other staff, as appropriate?				

		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do we include a <a href="#">statement of welcome</a> that specifically acknowledges lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people as members of our community, and specifically invites LGBT persons and families to membership on our:	Web Site?				
	Newsletter?				
	Bulletin?				
	Congregation signs?				
	Congregation brochure?				
Do we have inclusive language guidelines that are given to all worship coordinators and speakers, bulletin and website editors, and membership leaders and greeters? (see Policies and Environment section for more detail)					
Does our religious education program for youth address sexual orientation, beginning with an appreciation of family diversity in the primary grades and expanding to full inclusion in programs for high school youth?					
Does our religious education program for youth include age-appropriate education around gender identity and how gender roles and norms play out in our society, reflective of the experiences of transgender individuals?					
Does our religious education for adults incorporate lesbian, gay, and bisexual peoples' life issues and experiences?					
Does our religious education for adults incorporate transgender and gender variant peoples' life issues and experiences?					
Do we have support groups for LGBT persons and families with LGBT members?					

Outreach and Public Witness / Social Justice		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Does the congregation actively seek to build partnerships and relationships with local LGBT organizations and communities by:	Advertising in the local LGBT press (both print and online), inviting members of the community to visit your congregation for an inclusive worship experience?				
	Distributing a flyer on your congregation and its welcoming policy at community centers, book stores, restaurants, and clubs that are affiliated with LGBT communities?				
	Establishing and maintaining contact/partnerships with local LGBT groups and organizations, to build relationships, offer support in whatever ways are needed, and promote dialogue and interaction?				
	Establishing and maintaining relationships with local LGBT organizations for referrals and support of congregation members?				
	Hosting open houses for LGBT communities at your congregation?				
	Participating with exhibits and tables at local events targeted to local LGBT communities?				
	Engaging other clergy in the community in a discussion of theological support for LGBT inclusion and the pastoral needs of LGBT persons?				
	Participating in and/or supporting efforts to create justice and equality for LGBT people on local, state, and national levels?				
	Enlisting other clergy and congregations in the community in organizing support for an LGBT issue or participating in a march or other action?				
	Utilizing social marketing media such as Facebook and Twitter to reach LGBT people who may not be familiar with your congregation?				
	Joining LGBT individuals and organizations outside the congregational walls in observing special LGBT events such as Gay Pride month, National Coming Out Day, and Transgender Day of Remembrance?				
	Hosting a program or group for LGBT youth?				

#### SUGGESTED READINGS:

- [Acting Out Loud](#)
- [10 Things Your Congregation Can Do To Become More Welcoming to LGBT People](#) from the UUA's LGBT Ministries
- The UUA's [Welcoming Congregation Program](#)
- [Living the Welcoming Congregation](#)

#### FOR ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE:

- UUA's LGBT Ministries  
**Alex Kapitan**  
Congregational Justice Administrator  
(617) 948-6461  
[lgbt@uua.org](mailto:lgbt@uua.org)
- [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Welcome and Equality](#)
- [Interweave Continental](#)
- Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry, Pacific School of Religion: [Media/Resource Library](#)
- Human Rights Campaign Religion and Faith Program: [Resources and Publications](#)
- National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's [Institute for Welcoming Resources](#)

## Building Block #8

### SAFE CONGREGATIONS

Although the latest version of the Safe Congregation's Handbook was published in 2005, seven in ten UU congregations do not have safe congregations committees in place and one third do not have any written policies in this area. A sexually healthy and responsible congregation is free from sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and misconduct. There is much work for congregations to do in this area.

To be completed by:

- Congregation Minister(s)
- Director of Religious Education
- Youth Minister/Director
- Safe Congregations Committee Chair/Members

		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do you:	Have a Safe Congregations Committee or a Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team with primary responsibilities for these issues?				
	Have a written policy on safe congregations?				
	Have a disruptive person's policy and procedure?				
	Have written overall policies and procedures specifically on preventing sexual harassment?				
		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Is the Safe Congregation Policy:	Posted on the web site?				
	Run in the newsletter once annually?				
	Included in new members materials?				
	Posted on a bulletin board?				

		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Is the disruptive person policy:	Posted on the web site?				
	Run in the newsletter once annually?				
	Included in new members materials?				
	Posted on a bulletin board?				
		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Is the sexual harassment policy:	Posted on the web site?				
	Run in the newsletter once annually?				
	Included in new members materials?				
	Posted on a bulletin board?				
Reporting and Screening		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do you make sure that the Minister, the Director of Religious Education, and the Board Chair know the state laws for reporting concerns about abuse to children?					
Do all volunteers in the Religious Education program receive annual training on what to do if they suspect child abuse or child sexual abuse?					
Do you have a screening form for all employees, regardless of position?					
Do you have a screening form for all volunteers who work with children and youth asking them directly about possible histories of sexual offenses?					
Sexual Offenders		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do you have a draft of a limited access agreement or check list for convicted or accused sex offenders?					

		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do you have a written policy in place for a process for responding to an allegation of sexual abuse:	Against a Member?				
	Against a Visitor?				
	Against a Staff Person?				
Education		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do you include education about child sexual abuse prevention in the religious education program at least twice during elementary school?					
Once during middle school?					
And once for your teen group?					
Do you hold an annual adult education program on sexual abuse prevention for parents/guardians and families?					
Do you have two adults present in each class or program for children and youth?					
Do you have two unrelated adults required for cars transporting young people to activities?					
Do all leaders of youth groups sign the <a href="#">Code of Ethics for Adults and Youth in Leadership Positions (PDF)</a> ?					
Childcare		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Does everyone (including teens and young adults) who provides childcare at church functions:	Fill out the screening form?				
	Receive training on sexual abuse identification and prevention, both by others and by self, including guidelines on appropriate touch?				
	Are youth babysitters encouraged in writing and in a course to speak with minister or DRE if they have been sexual abused?				
	Understand two childcare providers must be present at all times with younger children?				
	Prohibit childcare providers at church functions who have not been screened and educated about sexual abuse?				

Pastoral Care	Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do you make sure the minister has a referral list of community organizations and therapists who specialize in sex abuse prevention and treatment in case you need them?				
Have support groups available to those who have survived child sexual abuse?				
Do you offer pastoral care for those who have survived child sexual abuse?				
Do you offer pastoral care for those who have survived or are currently experiencing domestic violence and/or sexual assault?				
Do you offer pastoral care for sexual offenders				

#### SUGGESTED READINGS:

- [Balancing Acts](#), by Debra Haffner
- [NEARI Course](#)
- [Safe Congregations Handbook](#)

#### FOR MORE ASSISTANCE:

- Contact **Heather Bond**  
Office of Ethics and Safety, UUA  
25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108  
[safecongregations@uua.org](mailto:safecongregations@uua.org)
- [Religious Institute](#)
- [Faith Trust Institute](#)

## Building Block #9

### SOCIAL JUSTICE/SOCIAL ACTION

The UUA has been a leader in promoting sexual justice. Individual congregations have an important role to play in advocating for sexual and spiritual wholeness in the larger society. [The Religious Declaration on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing](#) calls on faith communities to advocate for sexuality education in schools, work for access to sexual and reproductive health services, and promote full inclusion for women and LGBT persons.

To be completed by:

- Congregation Minister(s)
- Director of Religious Education
- Youth Minister/Director
- Social Justice Director/Coordinator
- Social Justice Chair/Committee

		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Is the minister or a key lay leader a member of:	<a href="#">Planned Parenthood Federation of America's Clergy Action Board?</a>				
	Local Planned Parenthood board?				
	Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice?				
	Religious Institute network?				
	Standing on the Side of Love network?				
	Human Rights Campaign Faith and Religion Program?				
	Interweave Continental?				
	TRUUsT (Transgender Religious Professional UUs Together)?				

Congregation Social Justice Statements		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do you have congregation statements on:	Sexuality education in schools?				
	HIV/AIDS?				
	Sexual orientation?				
	Gender identity and expression?				
	Reproductive choice/justice?				
Are these positions periodically included in the newsletter or bulletin?					
Are these positions posted on the congregation's website?					
Is there a copy of the Religious Declaration prominently posted?					
Advocacy		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do you advocate for sexuality education in your community's public schools?					
Do you hold community forums on sexual justice issues? How often and on what issues?					
		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Does your congregation include info on sexual justice issues and advocacy efforts in your:	Congregation newsletter or bulletin?				
	Website?				
	On a bulletin board in your congregation?				
	In announcements during service and/or in orders of service?				
		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do you conduct letter writing campaigns on sexual justice issues at the:	Local level?				
	State level?				
	National level?				

		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Do members of the congregation participate in:	School board meetings?				
	State legislative hearings?				
	Community rallies?				
<b>Ministers and Lay Leaders</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Plans for Improvement</b>
Does the minister(s) periodically give sermons that include prophetic witness on sexual justice issues?					
Does the board encourage the minister to appear in the local electronic and print media?					
Is the minister(s) an endorser of the Religious Declaration?					
Does the minister(s) and/or key lay leader(s) blog/tweet/post on Facebook on sexual justice issues?					
Does the minister(s) raise sexual justice issues with diverse faith leaders at such venues as community clergy associations?					
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Plans for Improvement</b>
Does a staff or volunteer regularly attend community and state coalitions on:	Youth?				
	LGBT concerns?				
	Reproductive choice?				
<b>Congregant Involvement</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Plans for Improvement</b>
Are congregants encouraged to join the Religious Institute's <a href="#">Faithful Voices Network</a> ?					
Are there letter writing campaigns or tables on sexual justice issues?					
Does the congregation hold community forums on sexual justice issues?					

Staying Up-To Date		Yes	No	Don't Know	Plans for Improvement
Does the Social Justice Director/Committee stay up to date by being on the email alert lists of:	<a href="#">Religious Institute</a>				
	<a href="#">Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice</a>				
	<a href="#">Human Rights Campaign Fund</a>				
	<a href="#">National Black Justice Coalition</a>				
	<a href="#">National Gay and Lesbian Task Force</a>				
	<a href="#">TransFaith</a>				
	<a href="#">SIECUS</a>				
	<a href="#">Advocates for Youth</a>				
	<a href="#">SisterSong</a>				
	<a href="#">Standing on the Side of Love</a>				

FOR MORE ASSISTANCE:

- [Standing on the Side of Love](#)
- [UUA's Social Justice Website](#)
- [Congregational Justice FAQ](#)
- Witness Ministries, UUA  
**Audra Friend**  
 Congregational Advocacy & Witness Program Coordinator  
 (617) 948-4656  
[socialjustice@uua.org](mailto:socialjustice@uua.org)

## CLOSING WORDS

Becoming a sexually healthy and responsible congregation is an ongoing process. It requires a sustained commitment by the congregation, its staff, and its ministers. No congregation will do everything, but every congregation can do something to assure that the community is safe and that sexuality is honored as a sacred part of life.

We are glad you have begun this journey. Know that you are not alone. The UUA district and headquarters staff is available to help you. The Religious Institute provides training and resources on each of these areas; please reach out to us with your questions at [info@religiousinstitute.org](mailto:info@religiousinstitute.org)

Thank you for your commitment to sexual health and justice.