



Religious Education Meet-Up, Spring 2026

Child and Youth Safety in UU Communities

offered on April 28, May 14, May 19 2026
recording is a compilation of these events



Welcome, Religious Education Leaders!



Please introduce yourself in the chat:

- Your name and pronouns, if you wish
- Congregation name and location
- Your role/title in religious education
- Optional: Name a physical item you've used to keep yourself or others safe



Today's Agenda

- Welcome
- Today's agenda
- Facilitator intros
- Chalice lighting
- Safety foundations
- UUA recommendations for all ages
– and specifically for youth
- Safety policies
- When more help is needed
- Reflections, feedback and closing

PLANTASTIC





Complexity

We want rich multigenerational supportive community for children and youth

and

We want children and youth connected with screened, vetted, trained adults





Complexity

We want to intervene when a youth is struggling

and

We want to honor privacy, space, agency





Complexity

We want to support families in keeping their kids safe

and

Different families have different ideas about levels of responsibility and freedom at different ages





Complexity

- No one definition about keeping kids safe
- Context matter
- Identities matter
- Individual stories matter





Tonight's Facilitators

Sam K Pearl, they/them

Congregational Life Consultant, Pacific Western Region

Lauren Wyeth, she/they

Congregational Life Consultant, MidAmerica Region

Evin Carvill-Ziemer, they/them

Regional Lead, New England Region

Sunshine Jeremiah Wolfe, they/them

Regional Lead, Pacific Western Region

Tonight's Tech Host

Chanel Gomez, she/her

Events Coordinator, Congregational Life



Chalice Lighting and Grounding





Safety Containers (1/2)

Communication

- With children
- With youth
- With parents



Your Team

Makes that Dream Work

Training

Professionals +
Lay volunteers





Safety Containers (2/2)



Abuse Prevention
Intentionally normalized

Policies

- UUA
- LREDA
- Congregation's Insurance Company





UUA Recommendations for All Ages

Find suggested practices, industry standards, recommendations and resources to support you in keeping children and youth safer at <https://www.uua.org/safe/handbook/safety-for-re>.

- Hiring and Screening
- Training
- Supervision
- Abuse Prevention
- Mandated Reporting
- Pastoral Care
- Check-In and Check-Out
- Diapering, Bathroom, and Toileting
- Food Allergies
- Youth as Childcare Providers





UUA Recommendations for Youth

There is overlap with the recommendations for all ages, but there are some differences and additional considerations when working with youth. Find suggested practices, industry standards, recommendations and resources to support you in keeping youth safer at <https://www.uua.org/safe/youth>.

- Hiring and Screening
- Training
- Supervision
- Communication
- Code of Ethics for Adults
- Participant Covenant
- Age Range
- Sex, Minors and the Law
- Two Unrelated Adults
- Spaces for Pastoral Care
- Overnight Events
- Transportation
- Permission Forms





UUA Recommendations for Youth Ministry

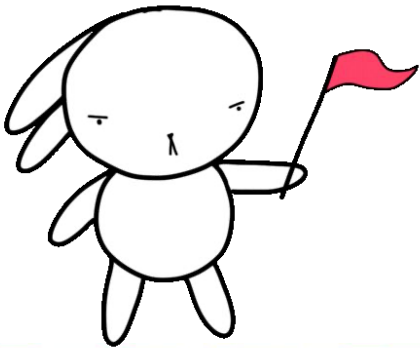
- Age range of grades 6-8 and grades 9-12, or a three year range like grades 8-10, due to:
 - developmental differences
 - have guidance on edge cases
 - reducing impact on younger youth
 - boundaries within programs as modeling
- Overnights
 - Sleeping guidance such as not sharing covers
 - Awake adults **or** strong covenant and random checks
 - Clear guidance on where to be
 - Medication policy





Rules with youth should cover:

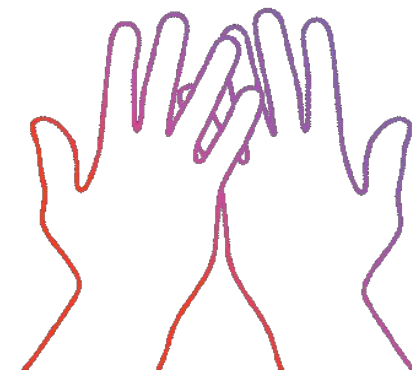
- Consent
- Following safety policies, such as:
 - staying in sleeping areas
 - never an adult alone with a youth (including online)
 - not leaving the event
- No sexual behavior
- No misuse of medication; no use of substances (including vapes, which aren't legal for teens)
- No violence, weapons, or harassment





Framing “Rules” with Youth

- Youth respond well to honesty and the real reasons
- Youth want to protect other youth
- The rules are a covenant with families, congregational leadership, and your insurance company
- Share the laws in your state around “sexting” and sexual contact under 18 as harm reduction
- Affirm that sexual exploration can be a healthy part of adolescence – just not at church
- When youth leaders buy in to the rules and can help present to younger youth





Safety Policies: Additional Considerations

- Shared events
- UUA + Region Endorsement/Promotion
- Policy disagreements
- Documentation
 - ‘Incident Reports’



When More Help is Needed: Policy

- Have a process and train your staff and volunteers – including scenarios
- Volunteers report to staff *any* harm to self or others
- Mandated reporting process that follows state law for neglect* and abuse
- Policy and process for staff to discern when and how to bring concerns to caregivers and find more support for the child or youth and their family



**anti-classist, anti-racist definition of neglect*



When More Help is Needed: “How To”



- For emergencies call 911 or local mental health crisis line (e.g. suicidal ideation)
- For other concerns (e.g. self-harm) give youth or child choices where possible
- Explain what you are doing and why
- “I care about you, I can’t keep you safe by myself”
- Provide follow up care
- If group knows of the concern, may need to provide reassurance and additional support and letter to other families



Closing



Please share in the chat:

- Something you learned today
or
- An appreciation
or
- An intention you are setting for yourself
or
- An area or question you would like to explore further



Feedback

Please fill out the feedback form at the link in the chat



Thank you for your leadership
and for joining us today!