



UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
ASSOCIATION

Dealing with Difficult Behavior in the Congregation

Saturday 6/23/2018 1:30 PM - 4:00 PM

Kansas City Convention Center -- 3501 CD

Rev. Dawn Cooley, Patricia Infante CRE, Rev. Lisa Presley

Congregational Life Staff Group



Agenda

- Welcome
- Theological Grounding
- Definitions
- Dealing with Known Offenders
- Dealing with Unknown Offenders
- Situations Involving Youth
- Q&A
- Closing Words



Welcome





Theological Grounding

- Good to embed everything we do in our theology
- Believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Universal Salvation
- By implication, means that we believe in potential of transformation and forgiveness
- Why is dealing with difficult behavior important?



Theological Grounding

- Doesn't mean that behavior isn't important
 - We need to safeguard the integrity of the community and individual
 - We are called on us to be the best we can be
 - To learn and grow
 - To forgive and move forward



Theological Grounding

- Not about forgetting or sweeping things under the carpet
 - Must tell the stories to be reminded of our humanity
 - Holding people accountable is respecting their worth and dignity
 - Always believe in possibility of redemption
 - Hardest part may be forgiveness



Definitions

- Difficult Behavior:
 - Something that diminishes either the well-being of the community, of an individual, or demeans others as individuals or a class of people
 - Important to not use “oh that’s just XXX’s behavior” as justification



Definitions

- Types of Difficult Behavior & Harassment
 - Gaslighting: manipulate someone by psychological means into questioning their own sanity/experience.
 - Bullying: use of superior strength or influence to intimidate someone, typically to force them to do what one wants.



Definitions

- Types of Difficult Behavior & Harassment
 - Sea-Lioning: a type of trolling or harassment which consists of pursuing people with persistent requests for evidence or repeated questions



Definitions

- Offender:
 - Someone who admits to and/or has been found guilty of criminal behavior
- Accused Person:
 - Accused; no admission or guilty finding
- Limited Access Agreement (LAA)
 - Written covenant between an offender or accused person that limits their behavior and access



Definitions

- Policies:
 - Covenant of Right Relations
 - Defines what Right Relations looks like
 - Disruptive Behavior Policy
 - Defines what happens when unacceptable behavior is encountered



Definitions

- Policies:
 - Personnel Manual
 - Clarifies that harassment either by/from staff will trigger certain actions



Definitions

- Youth:
 - The UUA defines “youth” as any young person currently in high school (or equivalent) or minors of the same age who have left school.
- Consent:
 - Permission granted for sexual activity, freely given by a person with legal capacity to do so.



Definitions

- Minor/Adult:
 - Legal demarcation between child and adult, usually 18
- Check the laws in your state to see if they differ



Dealing with Known Offenders



Dealing with Known Offenders

- The easiest to deal with-- provided you have your policies and procedures in place
- Lots of information on web to help you create policies:
 - www.uua.org/safe
 - [http://religiousinstitute.org/safer - congregations/](http://religiousinstitute.org/safer-congregations/)



Dealing with Known Offenders

- As you discover someone who has offended (sex offender, financial, other boundary violations), you want to enter into Limited Access Agreement (LAA)
- Governs their behavior and access in the congregation
 - Varies depending on the type of boundary violation



Dealing with Known Offenders

- Protects the offender as well as the congregation
- Should be put in place when accusations made
- If someone is new to the community, enter into as they enter in
- For existing members, enter into when you become aware of their status



Dealing with Known Offenders

- Job of the congregation: not to adjudicate, but take steps to protect both the congregation members from inappropriate behavior, and the offender/accused from untoward accusations
- Minister is pastor to all



Dealing with Known Offenders

- Bodies responsible for action:
 - Defined in your policies procedures
 - Can be Board, Committee on Ministry, specialized team, Personnel Committee (if staff member)
 - Members in holding high standards of compliance with covenants



Dealing with Known Offenders

- What do you tell the congregation?
 - Provide information on all safer congregation policies regularly
 - If it involves one-on-one interactions, no need to tell congregation at large; note in minutes without naming person



Dealing with Known Offenders

- What do you tell the congregation?
 - If involves the whole community, advise them judiciously
 - Often LAA includes shadowing -- that may be sufficient
 - Ensure you maintain appropriate records, and store under lock and key
 - Information is *confidential*, not *secret*



Dealing with Known Offenders - Case Study

Jamie is a long time member of the congregation, and has served as a member of the adult religious education committee. Jamie has just been charged with possessing child pornography. It has not yet hit the papers, but you expect it might any day now. Jamie is single, and has no children.



Dealing with Known Offenders - Case Study

- Questions:
 - How would you handle this in your congregation?
 - What policies/procedures would you need to have in place?
 - Does it matter what gender Jamie is?



Dealing with Unknown Offenders



Dealing with Unknown Offenders

- Who is an unknown offender?
 - Someone who fails to disclose a prior issue
 - Sex Offender
 - Financial Misconduct
 - Previous removal from a congregation



Dealing with Unknown Offenders

- Someone who initiates a new issue
 - Arrested/charged with sexual, financial or violent crime
 - Breaking covenant through
 - Gaslighting
 - Bullying
 - Harassment
 - Other ways of acting out



Dealing with Unknown Offenders

- Goals
 - Bring them back into right relationship
 - Protect the vulnerable in the congregation



When a Precipitating Event Occurs

- Written policies get triggered
 - Covenant of Right Relations
 - Defines what Right Relations looks like
 - Disruptive Behavior Policy
 - Defines what happens when unacceptable behavior is encountered



When a Precipitating Event Occurs

- Written policies get triggered
 - Personnel Manual
 - Clarifies that harassment either by/from staff will trigger certain actions



When a Precipitating Event Occurs

- Body to monitor/hold accountable
 - Board
 - Committee on Ministry
 - Task force



What Do We Tell the Congregation?

- When action is taken that impacts one person (ie, removal of membership), this can be noted in the Board Minutes.
- When restorative action is taken that impacts multiple people (ie, creation of a LAA), congregation should be notified as to cause and steps being taken towards safety, without naming offender.



What Do We Tell the Congregation?

- When action is taken that may require legal action (ie, if person shows up they will be considered trespassing), congregation should be notified and informed what to do if named offender shows up.
- While the actions around these issues may be *Confidential*, they are not *Secret*.



Unknown Offender Case Study

Chris has been a member for over a decade. Chris has been becoming crankier with the way things are going. Chris has written angry emails to the Board and staff. Despite the Board's attempts to meet with Chris in various configurations, Chris's behavior continues to escalate. Things come to a head when Chris stands up during worship and starts yelling at the minister and the worship associate, calling them incompetent.



Unknown Offender Case Study

- Questions to address:
 - How would you address this in your own congregation?
 - What needs to be included in your policies to address this?
 - Does it matter what gender Chris is?



Situations Involving Youth



Situations Involving Youth

- Youth in Youth Only Spaces
 - Shared responsibility between youth leaders and trained adult leaders
 - Supervision by trained Adults
- Youth in Adult Spaces
 - Parents and “the Village”
 - Multigenerational events with direct adult sponsorship



Situations Involving Youth

- Youth Offenders
 - Limited/Restricted Access
 - Legal ramifications
 - When to involve parents
- Youth Victims
 - Mandatory Reporting Requirements
 - When to involve parents



Policies and Recommendations

- Recommended Policies
 - Youth Group Covenant
 - Adult Code of Ethics
 - Youth Participant Guidelines for Events
 - Background Screening
 - Two Unrelated Adults
 - Training for Adult Leaders
 - Orientation for Youth and Parents



Policies and Recommendations

- Who Monitors?
 - Parents
 - Youth Leaders with Adult Support
 - Religious Educator/Youth Advisor
 - Safe Congregations Team (Board)



Policies and Recommendations

- Recommended Practices
 - Youth should always have a “chaplain.”
 - Restorative practices can be employed.
 - One on one conversation
 - Restorative Circle
 - Incident report should be completed with known facts

Resources

uaa.org “Youth Ministry Guidelines”



How Do We Respond?

- In the case of an incident, parents may be included in any meetings to ascertain the facts.
- Pastoral care should be offered to all involved parties.
- In adult spaces, parents are responsible for their minor children.
- Parents should be included in restorative process.



What Do We Tell the Congregation?

- The confidentiality of minors needs special care.
- The congregation typically does not need to be informed of specific incidents.
- Disclosure should be made to the smallest group possible.



Case Study Youth

Taylor, 15, has grown up in the congregation and attended the Religious Education program until Taylor reached the age to join the Youth Group. Taylor chose not to attend Youth Group but stills comes regularly, preferring to hang around during the service instead of sitting in the sanctuary. After the service, adults found cigarette butts and matches in an area that Taylor is known to frequent. Smoking is not permitted in the building.



Youth Case Study Questions

- Questions to consider:
 - How would you address this in your own congregation?
 - What needs to be included in your policies to address this?
 - Does it matter what gender Taylor is?



New Safe Congregations Material!

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Becoming a Safer Congregation: a Guide to Effective Safety Policies and Practices was created in 2018.



Questions?





Regional Safe Congregation Staff

- Patricia Infante, Central East, pinfante@uua.org
- Lisa Presley, MidAmerica, lpresley@uua.org
- Karen Bellavance-Grace, New England, kbellavancegrace@uua.org
- Sarah Gibb Millspaugh, Pacific West, smillspaugh@uua.org
- Dawn Cooley, Southern, dcooley@uua.org
- Heather Bond, National, hbond@uua.org



Closing Words

Take courage friends.

The way is often hard, the path is never clear,
and the stakes are very high.

Take courage.

For deep down, there is another truth:
you are not alone.

- Wayne Arnason