

Recommended LOAS Goals for Youth and Youth-Leader Safety Revised 2017

I LOAS is Committed to Upholding UU Principles Calling for a Safe and Caring Community

The introduction to *The Safe Congregation Handbook: Nurturing Healthy Boundaries in Our Faith Communities*, edited by Patricia Hoertdoerfer and Fredric Muir, reminds UUs that, “Our faith is a covenantal faith with a relational theology at its core. Hospitality and justice are essential elements of our covenant with one another and with the Holy. The lifeblood of our covenant is community: community in worship, community in lifespan religious education...and community in caring relationships...When we gather, we welcome others—newcomers and strangers—and we welcome our true, best selves. As we elicit the best in others we elicit the best in ourselves and thereby faithfully live our Unitarian Universalist values and principles.”¹

The LOAS Committee for Policy and Procedures Addressing Child Abuse recommends practices that train Youth Leaders to honor healthy boundaries between themselves and the youth they serve. Being a caring, capable and charismatic leader is no longer enough in the wake of child abuse within institutions of traditional trust. Youth Leaders now must intentionally model healthy behavior, thereby teaching the youth to expect a certain standard of safety. By modeling healthy personal boundaries, Youth Leaders also protect themselves from claims of misconduct. Although new practices may seem unnecessary or inconvenient to veteran Youth Leaders, their cooperation in good faith shows sensitivity and awareness. Veterans may grieve the loss of innocent intention in their reflexive behavior. Such is the mandate, however, of human progress—the goal being a safer environment for our youth and their leaders.

II Statement of the Problem²

Child Abuse is a significant social problem impacting millions of children every year. Because youth-serving organizations offer access to children and youth, such organizations can become magnets for adults who want to use that access to sexually abuse children and youth. The percentage of reported child abuse cases that involve a person unknown to the child is very small. Usually, an abuser is known by the child.

Child molesters use the strategies of seduction, trickery, and force to accomplish their sexual abuse. They use a very smooth process of grooming that correlates to the courting process. They lavish the child with gifts and attention, plan opportunities to be alone with the child with more intrusive touching, and rarely use force. However, force is sometimes applied and needs to be included among the strategies discussed.

¹ Introduction; p. ix

² Some text and ideas from Boy Scouts of America; *Youth Protection Training*; <http://www.scouting.org>

How do you recognize a molester? Child molesters are very difficult to identify. There is no foolproof screening process to recognize a molester, no matter how much checking you have done. Molesters are usually male, but can be female. Some child molesters are themselves children. The concept of “dirty old men in trench coats,” and “stranger-danger,” as the “type,” are myths. On the contrary a molester can be a person who seems too good to be true.

III Resources from the UUA for the Chairs and the Youth Coordinator

The Chairs choose the Youth Coordinator. The Youth Coordinator, in conjunction with the Chairs, chooses and supervises the Youth Leaders. The UUA can help educate the Chairs and the Youth Coordinator for their work with Youth Leaders.

For resources, Chairs may reference the following headings and links for Young Religious UUs on the UUA website:

www.uua.org/YRUU

Scroll to the heading, **For Youth Advisors & Religious Educators**

Link to **Print Resources for Youth Advisors and Bridging Programs**

Scroll to the heading, **Resources for Youth & Adults Working with Youth**

Scroll to the heading, **Available from the UUA Bookstore**

Link to **The Youth Group Hand Book**

The Youth Advisor Hand Book

The Safe Congregation Hand Book: Nurturing Healthy Boundaries in Our Faith Communities

Scroll to the heading, **OnLine Resources**

Link to **Seven Steps to Hiring a Youth Advisor**

IV Desirable Practices for the Youth Coordinator’s Training of Youth Leaders

Since Youth Leaders for LOAS come from a wide geographic area and have scheduling constraints, the Youth Coordinator may suggest that Youth Leaders take training within their various UUA Districts. Further, experience has shown that training alone provides no assurance against inappropriate behavior by Adult Supervisors.

For information about training sessions, reference:

www.uua.org/YRUU/training

Scroll to the heading, **Basic Youth Advisor Training (AT1)** for information about the 15-hour course.

Scroll to the heading, **Advanced Youth Advisor Training (AT2)** for info about the 15-hour course.

For more information about training, the Youth Coordinator can phone his or her UUA District’s Religious Education Program Consultant.

V Implementation of These Goals

While obviously desirable, it is not mandatory that Youth Leaders undergo training in order to serve as Youth Leaders at LOAS conferences. It is recognized that it would not be possible to adequately staff the LOAS Youth Program if Youth leaders were limited to trained individuals. Accordingly, each LOAS conference Youth Coordinator shall make these materials and the accompanying statement of LOAS Youth Protection Policies For Youth Leaders available to all Youth Leaders.

LOAS Youth Protection Policies For Youth Leaders During Program Activities

These Youth Protection policies are designed to protect both the youth and the adult leaders.

Two-deep leadership

To the extent possible, two Youth Leaders should always be present with any youth.

Limit one-on-one association

If one Youth Leader and one youth must confer, they should associate only in a public space and in view of another adult(s).

Proper preparation for adventurous activities

The Leaders should undertake activities having elements of risk with proper preparation, equipment, clothing, supervision, and safety measures.

No separate organizations

LOAS does not recognize any separate organizations as part of its Youth Program. Every activity in the Youth Program is open at all times to observation and participation by other Youth Leaders and parents.

Appropriate attire

Proper clothing is required for programmed activities. For example, while it may seem unnecessary to note, nudity while swimming and sunbathing is not appropriate during a Youth Program activity.

Respect of privacy

Leaders must respect the youth's privacy in situations such as changing clothes and showering. Leaders intrude only if the health and safety of a youth require doing so. Leaders must protect their own privacy similarly with the youth.

Separate accommodation

A leader is not permitted to sleep in a room with a youth, if the Leader is not the parent or guardian. The one exception is for a slumber party, authorized by the Youth Coordinator, with two or more Youth Leaders or adults present.

Constructive discipline

A Youth Leader should use positive techniques—reflecting UU values—to address a youth's inappropriate behavior. Never use corporal punishment.

- "Time out" is appropriate for youth to 10 years of age.
- "Logical consequences" are appropriate for 11-17 year-olds.
- With adolescents, avoid power struggles. Negotiate about challenging issues.

VI Recognizing and Reporting Abuse

Reportable child abuse is often described in these three categories:

- Physical abuse: is non-accidental, physical injury to a child inflicted by a person responsible for the child's care.
 - Sexual abuse: is any sexual act between a child and an adult, or another child who is substantially older, involving the misuse of trust and power.
 - Emotional abuse: are actions that significantly harm the child's emotional status and self-image.
- (See also definitions of abuse under NH State Law in Policies and Procedures Addressing Child Abuse)

Targets of sexual abuse are often children who:

- have poor self-esteem;
- seek affection or nurturing;
- live in families with drug or alcohol abuse, or a history of incest;
- tend to be loners.

Reporting abuse

The LOAS Conferences' Policy and Procedures Addressing Child Abuse

General elements of the Policy and Procedure Addressing Child Abuse (PPACA) regarding the reporting of child abuse are listed below.

- Youth Leaders

Youth Leaders should read the PPACA and should sign a document acknowledging their receipt of the PPACA.

- New Hampshire law

Under NH law not only professional caregivers of children but also ". . .**any other person having reason to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected shall report the same. . .**" [Chapter 169-C: 29]

Reporting: If any staff member, volunteer or conferee suspects that a child has been abused while attending a LOAS conference, it is the responsibility of the staff member, volunteer or conferee to immediately report his or her concern to the Grievance Officer of the Star Island Corporation. The Grievance Officer is the Manager or his designee. This applies if the abuse appears to come from another child or from a parent, guardian or other person responsible for the welfare of the child while on Star Island.

- General disclosure of PPACA

The policy shall be sent to every registered conference member prior to the Conference. Copies of the PPACA document shall be made available to anyone requesting them.