

Policy to Address Objectionable Behavior

This policy will guide UUFB in addressing situations in which individuals' behavior threatens the emotional and/or physical security of our members and friends. Instruction is provided in addressing abusive behavior within our circle of members and friends, as well as addressing objectionable behavior from visitors or others outside our UUFB community.

Other policies (existing or to be written) address specific concerns:

- Safety Policy for Children and Youth
- Medical Emergencies
- Weapons Policy
- Active Shooter Response

For personal conflicts and other issues which may be resolvable through direct intervention, the Minister may elect to speak with the parties involved individually or as a group to explore a resolution. Refer to the UUFB Guidelines for Healthy Relations.

The content of one's beliefs and the exercise of the right of respectful dissent will not be considered objectionable under this policy. Refer to the UUFB Guidelines for Healthy Relations.

General Principles

Guided by our Covenant and Unitarian Universalists values, we strive to be an inclusive community, celebrating diversity and individual freedom. The UUFB Covenant tells us that "Love is the spirit of this church...", and the UU First Principle guides us to "respect the inherent worth and dignity of all persons."

At the same time, we recognize that situations arise which threaten the well-being of a person or the Fellowship, or of the safe expression of beliefs or opinions. These situations must be dealt with firmly and promptly. Respecting the worth and dignity of each individual includes compassionately holding individuals responsible and accountable for their behavior.

We also recognize that violent attacks have been made on churches, synagogues, and other religious organizations. Such attacks have sometimes been preceded by escalating patterns of threatening behavior which may have been ignored or minimized. Addressing such behavior appropriately before it escalates is an essential part of any security plan.

UUFB will follow all applicable state laws and reporting procedures for physical abuse. Confidentiality will be maintained, consistent with Fellowship safety, by only disclosing the identity of individuals involved on a "need to know" basis.

Disruptive or Threatening Visitors

Welcoming visitors is essential to our Fellowship's health and mission. However, alertness for

incongruent behavior may help prevent disruptive or threatening incidents. The Safety Committee and the Board will make training available for the Fellowship to facilitate discernment of potential threats.

Services and open-door activities: UUFB participants are encouraged to be aware of their surroundings, and if a conversation with a visitor or a visitor's behavior does not feel right, they should remove themselves from the situation and contact the Minister or group leader present for possible response.

Staff safety: UUFB staff working in our building may be alone or with one or two others, presenting particular safety concerns. The Minister will work with staff to develop practices to promote staff safety.

Behavior Categories and Impacts

Objectionable behavior may include, but is not limited to, bullying, harassment, insults, or other abuse. It generally fits into the 3 categories below. Our response depends upon whether the impact is severe, and thus requires an immediate response, or whether the impact allows time for a more deliberate response to be developed.

Dangerous: Behavior perceived to be a threat to persons or property. Such behavior requires an immediate response.

Disruptive: Behavior interferes with Fellowship activities. Disruptive behavior may warrant an immediate response, at the discretion of staff or leader of the group present.

Offensive: Behavior considered inconsistent with UU values, likely to drive away existing members or visitors. Offensive behavior may be serious enough to require an immediate response, but may often be addressed in a more deliberate manner

In all cases objectionable behavior and responses to it will be logged for future reference. See Tracking Incidents below.

Reporting Objectionable Behavior

Anyone affected by or witnessing the behavior may request action by submitting a written, signed explanation of the behavior and its impact, including names of the person(s) who witnessed it, to the Minister and the Board President.

UUFB will not retaliate against anyone who brings forward a complaint. However, unfounded complaints brought forward with malicious intent are a violation of covenant and will require a pastoral and/or destructive behavior response.

Immediate Response

For dangerous behavior or other behaviors having a severe impact, the Minister or the leader of the group present will respond at once.

- The Minister or group leader will ask the individual to stop the conduct immediately or

leave. Police will be called if the individual does not comply with the request.

- The meeting or activity may be suspended until such time as it can be safely resumed.
- The Minister and Board President will be notified in writing of the incident, and the process under Deliberate Response initiated.

Deliberate Response

Within ten days after the incident is reported, initiate the steps below.

Step 1. Investigation: The Minister and President of the Board will assign an ad hoc committee to investigate the alleged behavior. This committee will meet with the person reporting the behavior and others who witnessed it. They will determine if the behavior meets any of the descriptions noted above under Behavior Categories and Impacts.

In assessing the claims, the committee will consider underlying causes, such as conflicts between individuals, mental health issues, and substance abuse. They must also consider the history of the individual, particularly if the behavior was previously addressed as objectionable at UUFB.

If the investigation concludes that objectionable behavior as defined above has occurred, proceed to Step 2.

Step 2. Corrective Actions: The minister will speak with the subject of the complaint concerning the impact of their behavior. They will be informed that the behavior is unacceptable and must stop. The Minister and/or staff may offer appropriate support to change behavior.

The Minister may establish a behavioral covenant with the person who has behaved destructively, clarifying in detail the ways they are to behave, and ways they are not to behave, in the congregation. This may include requiring that they have no contact inside or outside the congregation with an individual who has been affected by their destructive behavior.

Step 3. Board Action: If the step 2 intervention is not effective in stopping the objectionable behavior, the Minister will refer the issue to the Board for consideration and action. The Board may determine to impose conditions such as those below. These may be indicated for a period of time or be made permanent.

- Limit participation in committees or other Fellowship groups.
- Deny participation in Fellowship meetings, services, and events.
- Deny access to Fellowship property.
- Preclude joining the Fellowship as a member
- Revoke membership (see Step 4).

Any action taken by the Board will be communicated in writing to the individual in person or by certified mail within ten days. Reasons for the action will be given and the conditions (if any) for return specified. It is critical that any conditions imposed be

enforced to avoid further escalation.

Step 4. Membership: If the objectionable behavior is by a UUFB member, the Board may vote to revoke membership per the UUFB Bylaws.

An individual whose membership is revoked may request reinstatement as a member after a 12 month period. A meeting with the Minister and representative(s) of the Board is necessary to determine if changes in behavior have occurred. Conditions for reinstatement will be provided as appropriate, and the Hospitality & Membership Committee will be informed if membership is to be restored.

Tracking Incidents

Log: The UUFB minister will maintain a log of incidents and reports of objectionable behavior, accessible to the Minister and others on a need to know basis. Conclusions of investigations and actions taken will be included in the file.

Outside Community Interactions: Visitors who are disruptive or threatening at the UUFB building or our activities may also interact negatively in other churches or community organizations. Our Minister and other authorized individuals may share experiences of such individuals to other churches and organizations.

Police Reports: Whenever the police are called, the police report will be requested and maintained in the file along with the incident information.

Approved by the UUFB Board of Directors 11/12/2024