

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Central Oregon
Religious Exploration Handbook



Welcome

Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Central Oregon (UUFCO) Religious Exploration (RE) program.

Our UUFCO mission is, "Together, we find meaning, celebrate life, and serve the spirit of love and justice in our world."

The RE program works in partnership with parents and primary caregivers to provide the children and youth of this fellowship with opportunities to explore Unitarian Universalist values, nurture critical thinking skills, learn about themselves, and cultivate beloved community. To ensure that your family is informed and supported as you explore with us, please review these procedures that will guide us this year. Questions and concerns are always received with care and concern.

In Faith,

Amy Brock, Director of Religious Exploration
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UUFCO Relational Covenant and Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism

Our [Relational Covenant](#) is the commitment we make to one another. It expresses our promise for how we want to be in relationship with each other, so that we can nurture and sustain a loving community within our congregation and in the larger world. These promises are the very heart of our faith tradition, along with the [*Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism](#). The spiritual energy of this faith community is fueled by the way we approach, connect with, respect and treat each other. All families, staff, and volunteers agree to abide by our UUFCO relational covenant when communicating and connecting with one another.

*The seven principles are undergoing revision after a study from the Article II commission. A vote to move forward with renewed values is scheduled to occur at UUA General Assembly in 2024.

UUFCO Child Safety Policy

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Central Oregon follows a church-wide safety policy. A copy of this policy is available [here](#).

Ethical Leadership Practices for Adults Working with Children and Youth

- Adults in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering the spiritual development of both individuals and the community.
- Staff and volunteers must remain mindful that they will be perceived as having power, even outside of their role in the religious education program. No person may use perceived power and authority to fulfill adult needs. This includes the need for friendship, labor, decision making, and to educate others.
- Children and youth must be supervised by two unrelated adults at all times.
- All leaders agree to refrain from engaging in any sexual, seductive, or erotic behaviors with children and youth during their time in our programs and after young people have graduated.
- Parents and primary caregivers must always be aware when adults are in contact with their children, and such contact should have a justifiable and reasonable basis.
- In addition to parents being aware of communication, two adults must be included on all communications with minors.

Health and Care Guidelines

Illness Guidelines

Children exhibiting the following symptoms are asked not to attend RE programming.

- Fever over 101°F
- Diarrhea (more than one abnormally loose, runny, watery, or bloody stool)
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Severe cough
- Unusual yellow color to skin or eyes
- Skin or eye lesions or rashes that are severe, weeping, or pus-filled
- Stiff neck and headache with one or more of the symptoms listed above
- Difficult breathing or abnormal wheezing
- Complaints of severe pain

Vaccines and Masks

For the health and safety of our young people and the adults working with them, we ask that all volunteers and staff consult their physician about maintaining current vaccine protection. These include but are not limited to Covid-19, Influenza, and TDAP vaccines.

Masks are not currently required for children or adults not exhibiting symptoms of illness. However, they are encouraged as an additional safety measure. Adults and children exhibiting any visible symptoms of illness such as sneezing, coughing, sore throat, or runny nose may be asked to wear a mask or requested to leave the RE space.

As a covenantal community, we reserve the right to require masks and other safety measures at any time to ensure that all people are reasonably given the opportunity to participate in programming.

Handwashing

Children and adults of all ages must wash or sanitize their hands upon entering the RE space, after helping with toileting or diapering, before and after eating, after touching their face, and after playing outside.

Food and Allergies

Parents and caregivers are responsible for updating their children's registration forms to include current allergies. This information will be shared with classroom teachers. We try to provide similar snack options for children with and without allergies. If your child cannot be in the same room with a certain food, please let us know so that we can make a plan to support you.

Supervision and Care

Ratios

*Infants to Three Year Olds: 1 to 4 with maximum of 8

*Three to Five Year Olds: 1 to 10 with a maximum of 20

*Six Year Olds and Up: 1 to 15 with a maximum of 30

Parents visiting while supervising or supporting their own child are not included in this ratio or maximum number.

Registration, Pickup and Dropoff

All children and youth, including visitors after their first week, are required to have an updated registration form on file to participate in programming under the supervision of UUFCCO staff and volunteers.

Children and youth can only be released to individuals named on their registration forms. Staff and volunteers are permitted to verify the ID of unknown pickup persons.

Children in the nursery class are required to be picked up by a parent, caregiver, or other adult named on their registration list. They cannot be picked up by a sibling but siblings can wait with them in class if they choose. Elementary children and youth are released to find their adults during events where parents and caregivers are present on campus. Children are asked to return to RE if they cannot locate their grownup. Parents can request to pick their child up from the classroom with the RE teacher on duty that day. Parents are responsible for their children and youth after pickup from RE classes and events.

Safe(r) Congregations Protocols

All staff, regular classroom volunteers, and childcare providers are required to have a clear background check. Because UUFCCO is a public space, it is not always possible to ensure that everyone in contact with children has undergone safety screening. For example, parents supporting their own children in RE classes may not have completed our full screening process. Because of this, we recommend that supervision by two unrelated adults be implemented at all times.

In the event of an unplanned supervisory incident (parent running late for pickup, teacher illness, child injury etc...) where one adult may need to be responsible for the care of minors for a short time, the DRE should be notified with a text, call or email even if they are off site. Transparency is a way to ensure safety during those times.

We take the care and safety of our young people very seriously. If a person observes anyone exhibiting language or behavior that could be considered harmful to the development of young people, they are required to notify the DRE and/or the minister

immediately. All staff and volunteers are mandated reporters and are required to participate in investigations related to the safety and wellbeing of children and youth.

Photos

Because UUFCO is a public space, we do not offer a photo permission opt in. Our worship services are recorded. Children and youth who participate in services will be visible to those on zoom and may be seen in our public uploaded recordings. Staff will never use identifying photos of minors in UUFCO publications without permission from children and the caregiver that registered them. We ask that volunteers and staff not share any photos of children or youth. We trust that this will be respected, and it cannot officially be monitored. Please let a staff member know if you have concerns about photos or videos of your young people.

Injuries, Diapers, and Care

In the event of a physical injury or toileting accident during Sunday programming, the DRE or other supervising adult in RE should be notified. This person will contact parents to provide care or cleanup. If parents are not on site, such as during a youth activity, young people will be supported with care for minor injuries. Staff will contact emergency services for all injuries requiring more than basic first aid. While staff and volunteers do have some first aid knowledge they are not medical professionals and cannot give medical advice, provide medication, or treat injuries beyond providing a bandaid or ice pack.

Adult nursery employees and screened volunteers are permitted to change diapers and help with toileting for children three and under. This must occur in the presence of a second unrelated RE volunteer or staff member. Those changing diapers are required to follow the [7 steps of safe diaper changing](#) according to standard childcare licensing procedures. To minimize diaper changing, parents of infants and toddlers are asked to change diapers before leaving their children in nursery care. Parents should notify nursery staff if they object to diaper changes or toileting help during their time in care. Parents can choose to opt out and care for these needs on their own. Please notify nursery staff at check in if this is your preference.

RE staff and volunteers are permitted to pick up and hold children in the nursery/preschool class. This is often necessary for the care and support of children within those ages. Children over the age of three can sit next to an adult but will be redirected from sitting on an adult who is not their parent or caregiver. Staff and volunteers can use respectful touch to support children with safety needs. This might include holding a child's hand while walking to the playground or gently directing a frustrated child to a safe space until a parent can arrive to support. RE staff and volunteers are permitted to reciprocate appropriate touch when initiated by young people of all ages (hugs, high fives, fist bumps). Parents and caregivers should schedule a conversation with the RE director if they have concerns about these caregiving practices prior to leaving their child with RE providers.

Classroom Management

Children:

While UUFECO strives to maintain an open and inclusive space for spiritual exploration, it is not an academic learning environment. Our programs are not designed for the implementation of interventions or support beyond general redirection. Parents and caregivers are asked to settle and support their children when they are feeling energetic, anxious, or in need of one on one care. They will be called to assist volunteers and staff if their child does not respond to redirection, harms themselves, harms someone else, or exhibits distress for more than five minutes. Children in elementary and youth classes are permitted to return to their caregivers in the worship service at any time. Our worship services are inclusive spaces that allow people of all ages to explore together. It's always okay to accompany your child back to RE class or let them explore with you. Sometimes, kids really want to be close with their families and that is always okay with us.

Youth:

Teens are expected to remain in covenantal relationship with peers, staff, and volunteers both on and off campus. Covenantal relationships are relationships built on mutual trust and understanding. Together, with youth advisors, young people create norms and expectations related to their own needs and our safety protocols. This means that teens understand what is appropriate within the covenantal relationship and agree to report inappropriate interactions to parents or staff. In the event that harm occurs at a youth activity, every attempt will be made to move toward restorative justice. Depending on the severity of the situation and the extent of care needed, parents may be required to pick their teen up immediately. Teachers and volunteers are permitted to hold information that teens share with them confidentially. The exceptions to this confidence are reports of harm to teens, self harm or threats to harm to others. Teens are to be notified of this exception throughout the year. In the event that disclosure should be shared with parents, the DRE should be contacted to facilitate safety and support for all persons.

Fire Safety and Evacuations:

In the event of a fire or other event requiring evacuation or shelter in place protocol, the DRE or other designated adult in their absence assumes the lead. All children and adults in the RE space are to follow their directions.

Parents should always evacuate from the exit nearest to them. RE staff and volunteers will evacuate the classroom spaces. Adults can plan to pick their child(ren) up from the labyrinth, parking lot, or other designated meeting area.

When lockdown procedures are implemented, no person will be allowed into locked spaces until an all clear is given. UUFECO staff and volunteers will care for children and youth until they can be retrieved by a family member or other pickup person named on their registration.

UUFECO staff have access to visitor information and the information forms of registered families.