

## **Serious Covenant Breaches - UUCA Policy**

### **I. Introduction**

A. UUCA strives to be an inclusive community, embracing our differences in beliefs, opinions, and life experiences. The threefold foundation for our interactions is our UUCA Mission Statement, our Covenant of Healthy Relationships, and the UUA's Purposes and Principles. Because we affirm the central role of inclusivity in our communal spiritual life and because we understand that freedoms are stifled when relationships are unhealthy or feel unsafe, we commit to one another to do what is required to ensure that our community is strong and vibrant.

B. We believe that UUCA participants are each responsible for maintaining an atmosphere where both safety and openness thrive. When a Covenant breach occurs, it is appropriate for the leader of the group, or any individual who observes the breach, to address the situation promptly out of caring and with reference to our Covenant. A mutually satisfying resolution is the desired outcome.

### **II. Defining Covenant Breaches**

A. This policy shall guide us in addressing perceived serious breaches in which a behavior threatens the emotional and/or physical security of members, staff, friends and guests and which may require additional attention or follow-up.

B. The policy applies to a situation occurring on UUCA property, off-site UUCA- sponsored gatherings and all forms of electronic and written communications. It applies to any individual whether a member, staff, friend or visitor, whether an adult or child, and to an individual, two or more people and groups.

C. Some situations that might constitute a serious Covenant breach are: perceived threats to anyone's sense of safety; the disruptions of activities; intentional violation or disregard for UUCA policies, procedures and official decisions; as well as behaviors that are generally regarded as offensive. The privileges and inclusion of any individual must always be balanced by concern for the congregation as a whole.

### **III. Process**

A. When a serious breach requires an immediate response, this may be done by the designated/presumed leader of the group, or any individual, in the absence or non-action of a leader. If the behavior does not stop in response to a request for such, a range of options are available: ask the person(s) to leave the setting, remove them from electronic networks, suspend the meeting or activity until it can safely be resumed or take the ultimate step and call the police for assistance.

B. Any time such actions are taken and a minister is not present, a member of the Executive Team (the Senior Minister, Minister or Executive Director ) should be notified as soon as possible.

C. In the situation where a serious breach does not allow or require an immediate response, an oral or written report may be given to the Executive Team. Careful thought should be given prior

to making such a report. Individuals who wish to seek advice or coaching on how to proceed after an observed event may contact a member of the Healthy Relationships Team.

D. Once a matter is referred, confidentiality will be maintained at all times except in cases in which a behavior poses a threat to self or others and then the decision to reveal information must be thoroughly considered. UUCA will follow all applicable state laws and reporting procedures for child and elder abuse.

E. When applicable, The Safe Congregation Policy and/or the Mental Illness Procedures will be used as guidelines in responding to situations

F. Whenever possible and appropriate, a member of the Executive Team will inform the person that a concern has been filed about their behavior and is being assessed by the Healthy Relationships Team.

G. General guidelines to be followed by the Executive and Healthy Relationships Teams:

1. Deal with people and situations on an individual basis.
2. Do not define acceptable behavior in advance.
3. Avoid stereotyping.
4. Gather additional information required to obtain a complete picture of the situation and research any applicable laws.
5. When essential to the assessment process, the Executive Team may be asked to authorize funds for a professional background check to assure the correct identity of the person in question and determine if there are records of past criminal activity involving threats, harassment, or actual harm to other persons or property. (Acts of conscience or civil disobedience which may have resulted in criminal charges or convictions may receive distinct consideration.)

H. The following questions must be considered:

1. Dangerous: Is the behavior a real or possible danger to persons or property, including him/herself?
2. Disruptive: How much interference is caused to safe healthy interactions, the community as a whole, UUCA events and the functions of the staff as a result of this behavior?
3. Offensive: How likely is it that existing or prospective members will be driven away by this behavior?

I. The following questions may be considered:

1. Causes: Why is this disruption occurring? Is it due to a lack of information or familiarity with the UUCA community? Is it due to cultural differences? Is it a conflict between the individual and others in the community? Is it due to a professionally diagnosed condition of mental illness?
2. History: What is the frequency and degree of disruption? Have there been other reported breaches of a similar or different nature in the past?
3. Probability of change: How responsive has the individual(s) been to previous coaching or intervention? How likely is it that the behavior will diminish in the future?

J. The Executive and/or the Healthy Relationships Team may implement the following levels of response, as appropriate to the situation:

No Action: It may be determined that no action is warranted, and a designated person from one of the Teams will explain and discuss this with the person(s) who filed the report. Mediation or other resources may be offered in the event of a conflict between two parties.

Warning: A designated person from one of the Teams will meet with the individual(s) whose behavior is determined to be dangerous, destructive or offensive, to communicate the concern and behavioral expectations with reference to our Covenant.

Suspension: The individual(s) whose behavior is determined to be dangerous, destructive or offensive will be excluded from UUCA and/or specific activities for a limited period of time, with the reasons and the conditions of return made clear in writing.

Expulsion: If the requested behavioral change is intentionally or repeatedly ignored, or the content of the breach is so serious, and after a thorough assessment and meeting with the parties involved, the Executive and/or the Healthy Relationships Team (acting as a hearing panel) may recommend to the Board of Trustees that the individual(s) be expelled from membership and/or participation in the congregation. The Board of Trustees may accept or reject the recommendation or may consider the matter *de novo*. If expulsion is approved, the Board shall write a letter to the individual explaining the reasons for the action taken.

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