

UUMAN POLICY FOR HANDLING SEVERELY DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

While the creation of a beloved community open to a wide variety of individuals is one of the prime values held by our congregation and expressed in our Association's mission statement and principles, we affirm the belief that our congregation must maintain a secure atmosphere where such openness can exist. When any person's physical and/or emotional well-being or freedom to safely express his or her beliefs or opinions is threatened, the source of this threat must be addressed responsibly and promptly. Concern for the safety and well-being of the congregation as a whole is to be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of any one individual. Actions to address disruptive behavior are undertaken with compassion and the hope of reconciliation.

The severely disruptive behavior policy has been adopted for times when the disruptive behavior of an individual within the church environment leads members to voice their concerns about one or more of the following:

1. Perceived threats to the safety of any adult or child;
2. The disruption of church activities;
3. Diminishment of the appeal of the church to its potential and existing membership.

When dealing with issues of this nature the Healthy Congregation Team, the Minister[s] and the Board of Trustees will respect the confidentiality of the people and situation at hand. Confidentiality can encourage reconciliation and protect the parties involved from unnecessary exposure. Conversely, the injury caused by the offending person may be widespread or significant enough to require some portion or the whole of the congregation be informed or included in the reconciliation process. In consultation with the minister[s] and the Board of Trustees, The Healthy Congregation Team will determine the degree of confidentiality to be used during the invoking of the Policy of Severely Disruptive Behavior on a case by case basis. All others who may be involved in resolving such conflict will be requested to honor UUMAN's Respectful Relations Covenant and the need for such confidentiality as determined.

The following shall be the process of the Unitarian Universalist Metro Atlanta North Congregation in dealing with these issues:

1. If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by the Minister(s), if available, the leader of the meeting or activity involved, church staff, and/or a member of the Board of Trustees. This may include asking the offending person or persons to leave, or suspending the meeting or activity until such a time as it can safely be resumed. If further assistance is required, the Police Department may be called. Any time any of these actions are undertaken, the Minister(s), The Board of Trustees and The Healthy Congregation Team must be notified. A follow-up letter detailing what steps must be taken before returning to the activities involved will be sent by the Minister(s) to the offending party or parties. This letter will be composed by the minister with input from the Healthy Congregation Team.
2. Situations not requiring immediate response will be referred to The Healthy Congregation Team. The Healthy Congregation Team will respond in terms of their consideration and experience while observing the following:
 - A. The Healthy Congregation Team will respond to problems as they arise. There will be consideration of the UUMAN Respectful Relations Covenant, The Guidelines for Restoring Productive Behavior and Unitarian Universalist Principles.
 - B. Persons identified as disruptive will be dealt with as individuals; stereotypes will be avoided.
 - C. The Healthy Congregation Team will collect all necessary information, including interviews with the parties involved.
 - D. To aid in evaluating the problem, the following points will be considered:

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DANGEROUSNESS - Is the individual the source of a threat to persons or property?

DISRUPTIVENESS - How much interference with church functions is going on?

OFFENSIVENESS - How likely is it that prospective or existing members will be driven away?

E. To determine the necessary response, the following points will be considered:

CAUSES - Why is the disruption occurring?

HISTORY - What is the frequency and degree of disruption caused in the past?

PROBABILITY OF CHANGE - How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?

F. the Healthy Congregation Team will decide on the necessary response on a case-by-case basis.

However, the following three levels of response are recommended:

LEVEL ONE - The Healthy Congregation Team shall inform the Minister(s) and Board of Trustees of the problem and either the Minister(s) and/or a member of The Healthy Congregation Team shall meet with the offending individual to communicate the concern, including a description of the disruptive behavior and the choices the individual has to change that behavior.

LEVEL TWO – After consultation with the Minister[s] and the Board of Trustees, the offending individual is excluded from the church and/or specific church activities for a limited period of time, with reasons and the conditions of return made clear.

LEVEL THREE - The offending individual's membership is revoked and he/she is permanently excluded from the church premises and all church activities. Before this is carried out, the Healthy Congregation Team will have consulted with the Board of Trustees and the Minister(s). If the Board votes that expulsion will take place, a letter will be sent by the Minister(s) and the President of the Board of Trustees explaining the expulsion and the individual's rights and possible recourse. The possible recourse will be determined on a case by case basis.

G. Any action taken under item F., Level One and Two, may be appealed to the Board of Trustees, who shall consult with the Minister(s), and make a final decision.

H. To preserve institutional memory and consistent application of this policy over time, a record of each invoking of this policy will be maintained in a registry secured in the Church offices. Access to this registry is restricted to the Minister[s] and the President of the Board of Trustees who may share this information on a "need to know" basis.

I. A registry record includes the identity of the offending individual, all communications between the individual and the church relating to the invoking of the policy and supporting documentation. The record will also include, for the benefit of future ministers and Boards, a statement written by The Healthy Congregation Team; on the recommended course of action should offenses by the individual continue or recur.