

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Central Michigan Policy Regarding Safer Inclusion of Potential Sex Offenders

VALUES and HISTORY

UUFCM recognizes that sexual offenses are a serious violation of a person's physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being; we seek to offer a community in which survivors feel safe. Responsible policies help protect the most vulnerable people, including children and members of the LGBTQ+ community, from sexual offenses. Our fellowship affirms the voices of victims and survivors while offering support in their spiritual healing.

While UUFCM has long required criminal background checks on employees and Youth RE volunteers, for nearly 25 years we have operated and thrived without a policy limiting participation—or excluding from participation—members, friends, or visitors who may have been accused of or have committed sexual offenses. We are a faith that extends a welcome to anyone who seeks a community and spiritual home; we also strive to create a safe environment where no one feels threatened or excluded. Although it is not possible to protect the congregation from every potential threat, this policy and the practices it establishes serve to minimize the risk to our community while still maintaining a radically welcoming congregation.

Recognizing the inherent worth and dignity of individuals accused or convicted of criminal sexual conduct who seek inclusion in UUFCM worship or other activities, we establish this policy to enhance the safety of the congregation. Any such inclusion would be conditional, limited to low-risk individuals, and dependent upon complete adherence to the protocols and restrictions established by UUFCM.

FINDING OUT / DISCLOSURE

Anyone with a history of criminal sexual conduct or an accusation of criminal sexual conduct is encouraged to speak with the Minister (or, in the absence of the Minister, to another leader) to disclose this information. If someone in the congregation is aware of such a situation regarding another member, friend, or visitor, they should contact the Minister or another member of the Safer Congregation Committee (SCC).

Because this policy includes accusations of sexual misconduct as well as convictions, the person accused of or convicted of a sexual offense will be referred to as “(Potential) Sex Offender.”

DISCERNMENT / INITIAL MEETING

In every case that comes to the attention of UUFCM leadership, the Minister and one other UUFCM member, designated by the Board, will meet with the (Potential) Sex Offender to hear the details of the accusation or conviction. The (Potential) Sex Offender may have an ally present at this meeting if they wish. If there is a parole or probation officer involved, the Minister and the Board-designated UUFCM member will meet with that officer to gather additional information. The Minister and designated member may also consult other experts outside the congregation (such as another minister or counselor).

On this basis there will be a confidential meeting of the Minister and the Board-designated individual with the SCC. This committee consists of the members of the Shared Ministry Team, the Board President, the President-Elect, and the Minister.

The Minister and Board-designated individual will share relevant information with the SCC, including the severity of the offense and the circumstances, so as to assess the risk to the congregation. The SCC may then decide: (1) that it would be appropriate to exclude the (Potential) Sex Offender from in-person UUFCM events indefinitely; or (2) if appropriate, to craft a Limited Access Agreement between UUFCM and the (Potential) Sex Offender. Typically, only persons with lower-level Criminal Sexual Conduct (CSC) accusations or convictions will be considered for inclusion. If the conviction or accusation involves 1st degree (CSC) (see appendix)—the most severe CSC offenses—normally there will be a recommendation to exclude.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD

Based on this meeting, the SCC will then make a recommendation to the full board. If a Limited Access Agreement is recommended, the Minister and Board-designated individual will draft a Limited Access Agreement in consultation with the Safer Congregation Committee, the (Potential) Sex Offender or others in the congregation. For example, if the sexual offense involves children, UUFCM parents may be consulted as to the details of the Limited Access Agreement.

BOARD DECISION

The Board will meet in executive session (no visitors) to discuss action recommended by the Safer Congregation Committee. If a Limited Access Agreement is approved by the Board, it will be signed by the Board president, the (Potential) Sex Offender, and the Minister.

INFORMING THE CONGREGATION

Once a Limited Access Agreement is signed, the congregation will be informed of the situation in writing and through a congregational meeting such as the monthly Fellowship Life Meeting. In the interest of confidentiality, the congregation will be informed of the basics of the

situation but not the details. Individuals who wish to better assess their own personal safety may contact the Minister for more information. The congregation will be informed of who was involved in the decision-making as well as who is responsible for implementing the Limited Access Agreement.

MONITORING

One of the purposes of the Shared Ministry Team is to assess the effectiveness of the fellowship's ministry. Another function is to restore right relations within the congregation. Accordingly, the Shared Ministry Team, at their regular monthly meetings, will review the ongoing implementation of any Limited Access Agreements. They will assess how the arrangement is working for all members of the congregation and report to the Board.

RECORD KEEPING

The Minister will retain confidentially all records related to any (potential) sex offender, including the limited access agreement and the notes of any meetings, until three years after the individual is no longer associated with the Fellowship.

- *Approved by Board of Trustees November 2025.*
- *Not yet put into practice.*

Appendix

Michigan's Criminal Sexual Conduct Act (MCL 750.520a-g) outlines different degrees of CSC:

- **First-Degree (CSC-I):** The most severe form, involving acts such as sexual penetration under circumstances of exceptional cruelty or with a victim under 13 years of age.
- **Second-Degree (CSC-II):** Involves sexual contact with specific intent for sexual arousal or gratification, often involving certain aggravating factors.
- **Third-Degree (CSC-III):** Involves sexual penetration of another person who is unable to give legal consent due to age, or other factors.
- **Fourth-Degree (CSC-IV):** A misdemeanor offense involving unwanted sexual touching, especially when committed by someone in a position of authority (like a teacher or mental health professional) against a vulnerable person.

Michigan Sex Offender Registry Tiers:

- **Tier 1:**
 - **Registration Duration:** 15 years.
 - **Public Information:** Not public.
 - **Reporting Frequency:** Annually.
 - **Offense Type:** Generally for less serious felony sex crimes including offenses such as 4th-degree criminal sexual conduct against an adult, indecent exposure, possession of child pornography, or unlawful imprisonment of a minor.
- **Tier 2:**
 - **Registration Duration:** 25 years.
 - **Public Information:** Public.
 - **Reporting Frequency:** Twice a year.
 - **Offense Type: Crimes:** More serious felony offenses, like 2nd-degree criminal sexual conduct involving a victim aged 13 or older, distribution of child pornography, or pandering.
- **Tier 3:**
 - **Registration Duration:** Lifetime.
 - **Public Information:** Public.
 - **Reporting Frequency:** Four times a year.
 - **Offense Type:** This tier includes the most serious offenses, such as 1st-degree criminal sexual conduct, certain serious sex crimes against minors, or kidnapping a minor.