

# COMPREHENSIVE RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION POLICY

**Scope of Policy:** This policy covers only official programs of the Religious Exploration program. The Religious Exploration team is responsible for all participants who are attending official religious education programs while parents are responsible for their children when they are not attending their registered class.

**Terms:**

- Supervisor: A designated First Parish in Brookline adult (over 18 years of age)
- Participants: A member of the Religious Exploration program

**Adult Supervision and Safety:**

Adult supervision is an opportunity for mentorship, modeling and building intergenerational relationship. To insure adequate and safe supervision, Table I indicates the minimum ratio of adults to participants that will be maintained at all times in the classroom environment.

Table I		
Age Group	Adults	Participants
Nursery	1	3
Preschool	1	5
Elementary	1	7
Middle School	1	8
High School	1	10

In addition to ratios, Adult Supervisors must meet and respect the following conditions:

1. Supervisors should never be alone with a participant one on one. The only exception is when they are in an 'observable space' - a space that can be easily seen by others, for example the lounge area of a room when the doors are open.
2. Supervisors should have a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check, with a copy kept on record by the church. If a Supervisor does not have a CORI they must always be paired with a supervisor who does.
3. Supervisors should be over the age of 25. If a supervisor is not over the age of 25 they are to be paired with another supervisor over the age of 25.
4. During overnights at the church all supervisors must have a CORI on record.
5. All Our Whole Lives classes must have two CORI checked supervisors at all times.

The church completes a CORI check in order to gain information about a person's interactions with the legal system. If an individual's CORI check contains interactions with the legal system it is up to the Minister to decide about that person's involvement in the religious education programming. The Minister will consider the applicability and impact of the information obtained for the role they are seeking to fulfill in the Religious Exploration program in determining if they will be allowed to participate.

**Participant Conduct Requirements:**

Participants can only register in a Religious Exploration program aimed at their target age group; only the Director of Religious Exploration permits exceptions.

To insure the safety of all participants in our whole church community, the following are considered intolerable and are strictly forbidden while on the Church premises:

Possession of any of the following:

- weapons of any kind
- materials for producing fire
- illegal drugs
- inappropriate materials for age, including cigarettes and sexually explicit materials not used as part of approved curriculum
- playing with matches, or fire, unless lighting a chalice in a group with permission from leader or teacher

Intolerable behavior includes the following:

- violent behavior towards oneself or others
- inappropriate sexual behavior
- threats or threatening behavior
- leaving supervised areas (classrooms, playground, church buildings, and patios) without approval from teacher or parent
- destruction of personal or church property
- physically aggressive play, without the permission of teacher or church

## **Healing from Breaches of Standards**

The process of healing from breaching of behavior standards for all ages is outlined in the Congregations '*Conflict and Disruptive Behavior Policy*'.

## **Communication Policy**

Communicating with participants and their guardians is essential for a vibrant program. The aim of this policy is to balance the need for effective communication with the responsibility of the church to keep guardians informed and maintain accountability for safe communication.

All church communication from staff must come through officially designated channels. Personal email addresses or Facebook accounts should never be used to communicate with any participants.

All church communication with participants below the age to participate in the Challenge Class will always be copied to the participant's guardian including: emails, letters, text messages, and Facebook messages or posts, among others.

All church communication, including from volunteers and Challenge Class mentors, with participants in the Challenge Class and those aged above is not mandated to be copied to the participant's guardian. All communication will follow the Communication Values and Guideline statement as listed below:

## **General Values and Guidelines**

- Keep all communication related to the church program you are involved in.
- The best use of electronic communication is to facilitate face to face meeting.
- Volunteers should take great care over the language used to reduce misinterpretation.
- Limit the time of communication to between 8am and 8pm.
- Consider carefully and consult with a staff member before responding to any request to connect on social media with a youth. It is inadvisable to initiate a request with a youth on social media.
- All communication should be kept confidential unless it contains disclosure of harm including: self-harm, harm to another, or harm done to a youth.

## **Challenge Class Mentors**

Must be a member of First Parish in Brookline to fill role of mentor.

However, in unique circumstances, a mentor can be a member of another Unitarian Universalist congregation if required. Unique circumstance might include a student with special needs who would require a mentor with particular skills not available in this congregation, or a child who has left the area but wanted to “graduate” with their class and could accomplish this by working with a mentor from another congregation.

All mentors must have a valid CORI check.

## **Photo Policy**

No picture, or video, of a First Parish in Brookline Religious Education program or participant may be published in any newspaper, newsletter, brochure, or on the church web site, without written permission of the child’s guardian/s if taken in a non-public space. Worship services are assumed to be public.

First Parish in Brookline Religious Education students must not be individually identified in any photo displayed within the church without written permission of their parent/s. Identification is allowed without consent when sent in a private communication such as an email.

***Adopted by Parish Committee on June 2, 2014***