

Woodridge Congregational United Church of Christ



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Safe Space Policy documentation

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Version History

Version	Date	Description of Changes	Prepared By
1.0	03/17/2013	Initial Version	David K. Jeffrey
1.1	03/20/2013	Version approved by Executive Board. Includes some updates proposed by Board.	David K. Jeffrey

Document Purpose

Woodridge Congregational United Church of Christ intends to provide a safe environment for all children, youth, and adults. Vigilance is the key for this to be successful. In order to do so we will consistently follow the policies listed below. These policies are in place to protect the children, adults, and church.

The Pastoral & Staff Relations Department is responsible for keeping the policy up-to-date and relevant. Safe Church documents will be reviewed periodically and updated when necessary. The Woodridge office manager will be responsible for storing (electronic & physical) this documentation.

The Christian Education Department will be responsible for ensuring the policy is followed.

The Building & Grounds Department is designated to oversee all church digital communication sites.

Communication

- Woodridge Church will make every effort to keep parents/guardians informed about coming events and expectations.
- Open & honest communication regarding rules, expectations, and the process is always encouraged.

Adults

- These policies cover any adult that takes a leadership role with our children and youth. This may be a volunteer or a paid staff member. A leadership role can be defined as a teacher, teacher's aide, school coordinator, crib room helper, youth group activity leader, mentor, chaperone, driver, etc.
- Only persons taking an active role in the life of our congregation for at least three months may become involved in children and youth activities.
- Persons participating in our children and youth activities will receive training on our Safe Church policies when they start volunteering and every two years hence. A signed form acknowledging training is required. These completed forms will be stored in the church office.
- One-time use of non-trained adults is permitted as long as that person is working with a fully trained volunteer.
- Drivers need to have valid driving licenses and all appropriate insurance.

Background Checks

- Persons participating in our children and youth activities will undergo a background check.
- Necessary information (name, date of birth, social security number or drivers license number) will be provided freely by all persons intent on participating in our children and youth activities. This information will not be shared and will be stored in a locked cabinet.
- The background check will be administrated by Woodridge Church with the utmost confidentiality. The results will be viewed only by the church pastor and stored in a locked cabinet.
- Results will only be discussed the applicant and the Minister.

Two-Adult Rule

- Children and youth in our care will be under the supervision of at least two adults.
- If the two adults are married (or living together) then a third adult must be present.
- No adult should place themselves in a situation where they are alone or in a compromising situation with a child. This includes bathroom duty or waiting for children to be picked up following an activity.
- At the end of an activity at least two adults should be present until all of the children have been picked-up by a parent or guardian.

Bathroom duty

- No adult should be alone with a child in the bathroom.
- For purposes of activity clean-up or personal need (toddler use) the bathroom door should be propped ajar.
- No adult shall change any diapers.
If a child needs a diaper change, the parent will be alerted to handle the change.
- Proper hygiene practices should always be met by all, children and adults.
Wash your hands!

Children

- All participants are expected to remain with the class/group throughout the duration of the class or activity.
- All participants are expected to behave in a kind and non-disruptive manner. Each classroom has a published covenant to guide behavior.
- Hazing and bullying (verbal, physical, or cyber) are prohibited.
- Children and youth participating in activities away from church property are:
 - Expected to remain with the group.
 - Adhere to all behavioral expectations as if they were at church.

Training

- Persons participating in our children and youth activities will be trained on our Safe Church policies when they start volunteering and every two years hence. Persons trained are expected to sign the policy form as acknowledgement, a copy of which will be stored in the church office.
- Training classes will be provided on an 'as needed' basis with at least one training session scheduled annually at the beginning of the school year.
- The Pastoral & Staff Relations Department the Christian Education Department will work together to plan and deliver training classes.
- The Safe Church policies will be reviewed with the congregation annually as part of one of the regular congregational meetings.
- A Safe Church policy update will be included in the Pastoral & Staff Relations Annual Report.
- Leaders will make themselves knowledgeable in the primary evacuation routes.
- Church school teachers and children will participate in periodic evacuation drills.

Training Log

Adults completing training will be tracked in order to identify when/if additional training sessions should be scheduled. Sample of the log is shown below.

Adult	Date Training Completed			
Jeffrey, David	11/26/2012			
Southard, Marsha	1/17/2013			
Spencer, Rev. Scott	11/26/2012	1/17/2013	1/21/2014	1/20/2015
Therrien, Deb	1/17/2013			

*Dates shown in grid are for example only and do not identify actual training completed.

Building

A safe, warm, and inviting environment is vital to building and maintaining a strong church school and youth group program.

- Doors to rooms where activities are taking place should remain open during that activity. Doors with windows may be closed if necessary. Easy and open access to all activities is encouraged.
- During church school, all Parish House doors leading outside will be locked.
- All rooms hosting an activity will have a detailed map showing the location of the room and feature the primary exit route.

Activities

- A signed parental consent form will be required before children are allowed to participate.
 - Church school requires a completed enrollment form when the child begins to attend. It will remain valid throughout the school year.
 - Children visiting will be allowed to participate in church school and will not require a form but will be subject to all safe space policies.
 - Activities away from Woodridge or overnight activities will have separate consent forms for each activity.
- Parents will be provided with a list of advisors participating in the event and a contact phone number.
- Parents are welcome to observe any activities their child is participating in.
- Children will only be released from church activities to a parent or guardian.

Discipline

- Leaders are to handle discipline in a caring manner.
- No child will be disciplined using any form of physical form of punishment.
- Verbal warnings will not be insulting, degrading, or destructive.
- Communication is intended to communicate appropriate behavior and maintain order.
- If a child is disruptive the parent/guardian will be contacted.

Away or overnight activities

- At least three adults shall be present.
- Both male and female chaperones are needed based on the group.
- Drivers need to have valid driving licenses and all appropriate insurance.

Drugs, Tobacco, Alcoholic products

- The use of drugs, tobacco, alcoholic products is strictly forbidden at all Woodridge Church youth and church school events.

Electronic world

Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation of children, youth, elders, and vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.

Cameras and other electronic devices

- Use of cameras, imaging, and other electronic devices must be done in a responsible manner.
- Devices that are capable of recording or transmitting visual images must not be used in any area where an individual might expect privacy, such as a rest room, shower, or sleeping quarters.
- This section applies to all adults, children, and youth.

Digital Communications/Internet

- **All** communication sent digitally (e-mail, social network sites, notes, or posts, etc.) is NOT CONFIDENTIAL and may be shared or reposted to others.
- In the virtual world healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to as they are in the physical world.
- Adults should not submit “friend” requests to minors or youth. Youth may request friendships with adults, and adults should discern the level of contact they want to maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.
- Photo’s that are published on church sponsored sites should not include name or contact information for minor children or youth.
- A representative of the Building & Grounds Department shall be designated to oversee all church digital communication sites, including the web-site and Facebook page.

Reporting

- Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult and child/youth should be promptly reported to the Minister and Moderator. This includes witnessed inappropriate conduct or conduct reported to an adult.
- All reports are to be handled confidentially and with the utmost respect for **all** involved. No judgments are to be made. Initial investigation should only be conducted by the Moderator and/or Minister. In-depth inquiry should be handled by the proper authorities.
- If the Minister is involved in the inappropriate conduct or relationship then the Moderator and Senior Member at Large will be contacted.
- If the Moderator is involved in the inappropriate conduct or relationship then the Minister and Senior Member at Large will be contacted.
- Minister and Moderator will contact the proper authorities, i.e. local police and/or DCYF.
- If you feel that reported/witnessed behavior is not being handled in an appropriate manner then you should feel comfortable with contacting the local police and/or DCYF.

- Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation of children, youth, elders, and vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Appendix

Obtaining background checks

Criminal background checks can be obtained from the Rhode Island Attorney General's Bureau of Criminal Identification (BCI) Unit. The details are provided below. All BCI records are confidential and will be treated as such.

This information is up-to-date as of 03/17/2013.

Process:

- Complete Woodridge Authority for Release of Information form.
- Complete the BCI disclaimer (copied onto Woodridge letterhead).
 - Form must be signed by volunteer and notarized.
- Secure a copy of **one** of the following photo identifications:
 - State issued driver's license
 - State issued identification card
 - Passport
- Obtain \$5.00 check or money order payable to BCI (no cash).
- Mail to or visit AG's office at 150 South Main Street, Providence, RI 02903. Provide a self addressed stamp envelope for return (if mailed).

Forms

The following section describes forms used for church school and youth activities. Both Woodridge and Edgewood Congregational churches are listed in some of the documents.

Woodridge Safe Space policy

This document is to be presented to and signed by all adults completing safe church training. A copy will be kept on file in the Woodridge Church office.

Woodridge Authority for Release of Information and BCI Disclaimer

Background checks will be performed on all volunteers and paid staff. Authority for Release of Information and BCI disclaimer forms are needed to obtain a criminal background check from the Rhode Island Attorney General's office.

Parental Consent & Medical Release form

Form includes parental contact, insurance, doctor, and some medical information. Signed document must be provided by parent for each child for each activity.

Liability Release form

Activity permission form

Combined youth group permission form