

Sunday Programs for Children & Youth

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Supervision and Safety Policies for Parents

When at Foothills Unitarian Church and not in the care of a Foothills Unitarian childcare giver (employed or approved by the church) or in a church program staffed by adult volunteers, parents/guardians are responsible for their children's behavior and well-being.

1. Parents are responsible for the supervision of their children inside and outside the Foothills Unitarian Church building, or anywhere on our grounds when not in church program supervised by staff or adult volunteers.
2. Parents are asked to pick up their children as programs end each Sunday.
3. Children are asked to follow our behavior guidelines requiring safe, kind and respectful behavior towards each other and our church building and campus. Parents are asked to discuss the expectations and rules for safety with their children.
5. A teacher, parent or childcare giver must be present on the playground at all times when children are playing there. Playground gates must be kept closed and latched at all times.

Safety & Behavior Policies for Children & Youth

Behavior Policies for Children and Youth in Foothills Programs

Every person has inherent worth and dignity regardless of age, so we expect teachers, students and parents to honor each other by listening with respect; by treating each other with kindness and compassion; by providing an environment that is physically and emotionally safe.

The following are prohibited during all Foothills Unitarian Church sanctioned activities where children or youth are present.

- a. Sexualized behavior of any kind.
- b. Possession and/or use of drugs and alcohol.
- c. All forms of violence (physical, verbal, sexual, and otherwise).
- d. Weapons

Our goal is to aid in the development of each student to the student's fullest potential. The following policies are specific to children and youth in Foothills Programs.

- a. Participants in programs for children and youth agree and respect group behavior covenants that insist on kind, inclusive and non-violent behavior.
- b. Individual bodily autonomy and identities are respected in our programs.
- c. Disparaging comments or actions will not be accepted. Students are encouraged to recognize and resist stereotypes and biases and to challenge prejudice.
- d. During Foothills programs for Children & Youth, students must ask, and receive permission by an adult FM staff person or volunteer before leaving the classroom or meeting space. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult volunteer if they leave a program space.

Covenants

With basic guidelines provided by the Family Ministry Staff, each adult volunteer team, in collaboration with their students, will create a class covenant which includes standards of acceptable behavior in the classroom. Any student who goes outside these standards will be given two verbal reminders. These reminders will be given in a way that does not embarrass or humiliate the student and, when possible, will not be given in front of other students or adults.

Consequences

Any child/youth who continues to behave in an unsafe or destructive manner will be offered one of the following options as the leader or RE Staff member feels is appropriate:

- a. The child/youth will be asked to take a brief “time apart” in a corner of the classroom. In a few minutes the teacher will invite the child to rejoin the group with acceptable behavior.
- b. The leader may contact the Family Ministry staff to request that the child or youth help elsewhere in the program for the remainder of the session.
- c. The student will be asked to leave the classroom and join his/her parents in the Sanctuary. An adult will escort the child to the sanctuary to assure their safety.
- d. If a student’s behavior results in injury to another person or damage to property, the student will be asked to make restitution appropriate to the severity of the behavior and the age of the student. The child’s parents and the DRE will be included in this decision

Confidentiality

Adult Leaders and Youth Advisors may come in contact with information of a confidential nature during check-ins or classes/meetings. A child/youth's confidentiality should be respected, except under the following circumstances:

- a. If a child is doing harm to themselves.
- b. If a child is doing harm to another.
- c. If someone else is doing harm to a child.

Under these circumstances, the parent/guardian of the child/youth, or the Director of Family Ministry or one of our Ministers should be informed. The safety of the child/youth must be the primary driver. If a volunteer is uncertain as to whether or not information should be shared, she/he can speak to the Director of Family Ministry or Minister, who will maintain confidentiality if it is determined that confidentiality should not be breached. When in doubt, the Religious Professionals (Director of Family Ministry and Minister(s) who are designated mandatory reporters will make the final decision on whether or not information should remain confidential.

Check-in & Check-out Procedures for Children & Youth

Check-in for Children's Small Groups begins at 20 minutes prior to each church service.

We ask parents to check their child in to their small group in the Family Ministry Hallway at the beginning of each church service using the tablets provided. The system prints a nametag label for each child with their parents phone number and a large unique number. The system also prints a nametag for the parent with a matching number. Youth in Middle and High School may check themselves into their small groups without the assistance of a parent.

Parents are asked to Check-out their children with 10 minutes after the church service ends. Parents will check their child out from their classroom or on the playground with the Adult Volunteer or Foothills Staff person on duty by showing their nametag with the number that matches their child's nametag and signing them out on the class list. Children not picked up within 15 minutes after the service will be transferred to the supervision of the Family Ministry staff on the playground or taken to find their parents by a staff member.

Youth in middle and high school Youth Groups can leave their Small Groups without being checked out by a parent.

Movies/ Electronic Media

1. When using movies and electronic media for children's groups and youth groups, the selection of an appropriate movie should be made that is mindful of the age and experience diversity within the classroom/group, and is respectful and inclusive to all. The DFM, or FMC and parents will be informed of any movies that will be shown in advance of the showing.
2. For all groups, efforts should be taken to choose movies that do not promote or glamorize disrespectful relationships or behavior; unsafe sex, or casual sex without commitment; senseless, disturbing and /or glamorized violence; or the use of illegal substances or unhealthy lifestyles.
3. High School Youth Group and OWL Programs will be required to seek permission from the DFM before showing an R-rated movie. Efforts first are made to acquire a suitable movie with a lower rating to ensure inclusion of all youth.
4. No child or youth will be required to view a chosen film. Parents will be required to sign a permission form for R-rated movies.
5. Staff and adult volunteers must observe appropriate boundaries of behavior, adhering to the Code of Ethics (attached # 2) when communicating with youth and children via electronic media.

General Safety/Medical Policies

a. Policies for Adults Working with Children & Youth - All Adults working with children & youth must be a minimum of 18 years old, have been attending Foothills for a minimum of one year, and undergo a background screen through Foothills Unitarian Church contracted screening service. A youth age 15 or older may serve as a classroom assistant in a group for children if working in partnership with an adult. Adults working with middle and high school youth must be a minimum of 25 years old. All groups for children must have a minimum of two adult leaders present for every session. If only one leader is available a Foothills staff person will assist the group or the group will combine with another group to meet the two adult minimum.

b. Welcoming Children/Youth with Special Needs - A primary goal of our Family Ministry program is to welcome every child/youth and family to our church. Our church campus is wheelchair accessible and we work with parents of children with special needs to help make their church experience positive. The Family Ministry staff will consult parents and volunteer leaders to develop a plan for supporting children, including adjusting the classroom environment, or modifying content. We will enlist additional support staff for children with with unique needs if required.

c. Medical Conditions - We ask that parents whose children are on specific medications or have special medical conditions alert the Family Ministry staff as they see fit. Medical conditions will be communicated to leaders in a confidential manner.

d. Illness - Please do not bring children to church with fever, flu or communicable illness such as Covid 19, chicken pox, conjunctivitis, etc.

e. Medical Emergencies - In the event of an accidental or medical emergency, teachers will immediately contact the child's parents and the DFM and/or FMC, and summon medical help if necessary.

a. Food Safety - a light snack may be provided during programs for Children & Youth. Parents will inform the Family Ministry Staff of any food allergies or special dietary needs that a child/youth has when they first attend. Severe food allergies will be posted on their class roster. If your child has food allergies that prohibit them from eating the snack provided, we ask parents to provide an appropriate snack.

Childcare Policies/ Procedures

Childcare offered during Sunday Morning Worship and for Foothills Unitarian classes and events will be administered by The Family Ministry Coordinator.

Childcare Ratios

In accordance with Church policy, children who are present during any church sponsored event, meeting or program that takes place at Foothills Unitarian Church must be supervised by a trained childcare giver at all times. There must be

- 1 childcare provider for every 6 children ages 3-12
- 1 childcare giver for every 2 infants and toddlers.

Church policy requires that two childcare providers must be present at all times, or the childcare provider must leave doors open and a supervising adult must check in frequently. If more than 15 children will be in childcare, an adult childcare supervisor, over age 18, must be on duty at all times. Childcare provider must be a minimum of 14 years old and childcare givers age 14-17 must be supervised by an adult.

Childcare providers must be directly supervised by a Foothills Unitarian Church Family Ministry Staff person or an adult representative of the church group sponsoring the event. If an adult childcare giver is not available, an adult member of the sponsoring committee is responsible for supervising childcare givers under age 18 and ensuring that all procedures are followed, cleanup is completed at the end of the event.

Name Tags

All adults and teens involved in providing childcare will wear a nametag, which also identifies them as "Childcare Staff". All children will wear nametags so that staff can identify all children by name.

Outdoor Playground

Two childcare staff must be present on the playground at all times when children are present. The childcare giver will ensure that children are playing safely and respectfully.

Youth Group Safety Policies

Behavior Guidelines for Youth

The following are the guidelines and clear expectations for all YRUU participants:

a. We are a caring community. Participation is encouraged in all gatherings, trips and activities in order to benefit fully from the program. If you find yourself feeling left out, you are encouraged to take initiative and invite yourself into a group. Approaching a youth advisor is a sure way to feel included. It is part of their job to help people feel welcome in community.

b. Participants should have consideration and respect for the physical and emotional well-being of the community, hosts and places of gathering. Inappropriate or offensive language or behavior is not conducive to building community. Please use discretion when using colorful language, telling jokes/stories or playing games. If you feel uncomfortable with any activity happening at the event, do not hesitate to approach a youth advisor.

c. No drugs, alcohol or tobacco.

Prescription drugs are ok, including nicotine patches or gum if you are a smoker. If you bring any substances to a gathering, you will be asked to turn it in to a youth advisor who will hold it to the end of the gathering. If substance use is discovered, the youth will be asked to leave, no questions asked.

d. No weapons or implements of harm, violent behavior or language. (This includes laser pointers, utility knives, and bullying) YRUU participation should be in a safe environment. No weapons or implements of harm are necessary or will be tolerated. If you bring an implement of harm to a meeting, on a trip or to any other event, you must turn it in to an advisor who will hold it for the duration of the event, at which time it will be returned to you, no questions asked. Violent behavior or language, including bullying will not be tolerated and consequences will be determined by the YAC (Youth Adult Committee.)

e. No sexual or sexualized activity

A sexual relationship between youth and an adult is absolutely forbidden. Sometimes romantic relationships develop between youth, but we request that physical aspects of relationships be kept to an absolute minimum. Coupling is exclusive, can make people feel left out and is not conducive to building community.

f. No one may leave the youth event boundaries without permission. You are here to enjoy the intentional community being created. Please respect this and if you must leave, communicate with an adult prior to taking action.

g. Youth Behavior Covenant (attached #9) must also be signed by all Youth Group participants.

Youth Group Advisor Policies

All youth advisors for our YRUU high school youth group must be a minimum of 25 years old. Youth groups should strive to have at least one adult of each gender on an advisor team. Two adult advisors are required to be present with youth at all times. If needed, permissible additional adult advisors may be other team members, committee liaisons, and/or parents approved by advisor and/or DRE. The adult-to-youth ratio will be no less than 1:7.

Any offsite meetings must be approved in advance by the DFM. At the end of all meetings, advisors will ensure that all youth are picked up by parents, or have a designated ride, before leaving Foothills Unitarian Church or the offsite meeting location.

Adult Volunteer Social Media Policy

Adults will seek parent/guardian permission before communicating with youth and include an opportunity for the parent/guardian to limit interaction. Parents have the right to be copied on any communication they request. If they request to be added to group conversations, their role is only to witness and share any relevant logistic information pertaining to their youth. They are encouraged to share any concerns about the group business with adult leaders or regional staff rather than participating in conversation. Parents and UUA staff have the right to ask to view any communication between adult volunteers and youth.

When communicating electronically with youth, adults must include a second adult on the message or communication. If a youth contacts an adult one on one, the adult has the responsibility to redirect the conversation to add a second adult to the communication and/or redirect the conversation to the appropriate platform.

- If it is necessary to have a virtual one-on-one interaction between a youth/adult, the adult will:
 - Let other people know (staff and/or parent guardian) you will be communicating, around what time, and what about.
 - Make sure there is a record of the conversation, including recording phone calls. Documentation should be archived for no less than 12 years.
 - Adult volunteers and staff are expected to stay in “adult role” on any social media platform in which their posts are visible to youth. This means posts are appropriate for youth to view and are not sexualized, discriminatory, harassing, or otherwise contrary to the rules and philosophy of this policy and UU values.

Field Trips

Field Trips

Parents must sign Field Trip permission form (see attached #8) when children are leaving the church premises for a church sponsored activity. The destination and expected time of return will be posted in the church school office. Leaders will carry the names and emergency contacts with them at all times. There will be a minimum of two adults accompanying children and all drivers must be insured and have a copy of the driver's license and insurance on file in the RE office. Children 4 and under must be restrained in appropriate child safety seats, and all passengers must wear a seatbelt.

Field Trips

Walking Field Trips

A Walking Field Trip permission form (attached #6) must be signed for children to participate in walking field trips within ½ mile of the church during their Foothills Unitarian Church Sunday morning class.

Overnights

When scheduled, overnights will be considered a part of the program and will be planned to promote the mission of the Family Ministry program or Youth group. The primary goal of conducting the overnight must be the emotional safety and well-being of our youth. During an overnight event, all Family Ministry policies remain in effect.

Overnights may only be held on the premises of the Foothills Unitarian Church and each participant will need a signed Overnight Permission Form (attached #7) from his/her parent/guardian.

Overnights will occur on evenings that provide sufficient time the next morning for clean-up and wrap-up of activities. Despite the high energy potential of lock-ins, it is recommended that overnights have lights-out by midnight, to ensure adequate sleep.

The following rules are publicized and followed:

1. Overnights will be chaperoned by

Sexualized behavior of any kind is not permitted at the FUUC sanctioned event.

b. Possession or use of Drugs and alcohol are prohibited.

c. All forms of violence, physical, verbal, sexual, or otherwise will not tolerated during any Foothills Unitarian Church sanctioned event. Weapons are not permitted.

d. Separate housing arrangements shall be provided for males and females under the age of eighteen or for others, including gender non-conforming youth at all Foothills Unitarian Church sponsored or financed youth events. Under no circumstances should a planned overnight be announced on the Foothills website or advertised to the general public.

Complaints and Grievances

Any student or parent who feels that a Children's Small Group Leader or Youth Advisor has behaved inappropriately may register a complaint with the DFM. They will review the situation to determine what action, if any, should be taken. If it is determined that a leader has been physically or psychologically abusive to any child, that leader will be immediately removed from their leadership position.

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