

CUC Youth Safety Policies

The Canadian Unitarian Council is committed to holding safe and inclusive events for the youth of our denomination.

To this end the following policies, rules, and requirements have been developed to help clarify responsibilities and expectations for the youth, and the adults who work with them, when attending programs and events run by the CUC. These policies will be in effect at all CUC Youth Events.

These policies are based on current practice in Canadian youth ministries and standard, professional best practices regarding youth work, so they are recommended for CUC member congregations to adopt and adapt for their own congregational events and circumstances.

The intent of this document is to provide a common location where all these policies and their rationales can be found. Recognizing that standards, values and best practices change and evolve over time, these policies should be understood to comprise a living documents and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

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CUC Youth Event Rules

Rational

The following rules have been adopted to foster the creation of safe and inclusive community during youth conferences, trainings and other events where youth are the main participants and where there is an 'overnight' component. These rules are intended to offer a "minimum expectation" for behavior of participants and are based both on valued behavioral norms that are promoted in UU Youth culture as well as insurance requirements and best safety practices. For these reasons, these rules will be in effect at all CUC youth events and are recommended for use at the congregational level as well.

Exclusive behaviours, typically involving small closed groupings of individuals, have been identified by both youth and adults, to be detrimental to a variety of the goals of UU youth gatherings and events.

These goals include but are not limited to:

- community building and stretching personal comfort zones
- creating safe, sacred space
- encouraging personal and spiritual growth
- building strong and healthy friendships amongst youth and between youth and adults
- allowing youth to grow and flourish in a respectful and open environment

Cliques, bullying, drug and alcohol use, violence and overtly sexual behavior all diminish the chance for these goals to be reached.

Rules

The following apply to all participants of youth events, regardless of age:

- Youth participants must be between 14 – 20 years of age*
- Adults Advisors (or other adult volunteers) must be 25 years of age or older and must remain in the role of advisor at all times
- A maximum ratio of 8:1*, youth to adults, will be used for all events with an overnight component
- A minimum of 2 adults advisors must always be present at any youth event
- All youth participants (regardless of age) must have an advisor present
- All participants must stay on site for the duration of the event. No leaving the site except as part of a planned activity
- All participants must follow the site's rules
- Only registered participants may attend (No drop-ins)
- All participants must be sober at all times (No illegal drug, substance, or alcohol use is permitted)
- Peaceful behavior and actions must be maintained at all times (No violence, threats of violence or weapons are permitted)
- Inclusive, appropriate behaviors must be maintained at all times (No violating the CUC Policy on Sexualized Behaviour at Youth Cons – see below)

- All participants must sleep individually (1 person per sleeping bag or blanket)
- All participants must maintain appropriate dress for the duration of the event (Public nakedness at CUC Youth Events is not permitted)
- All participants over the age of 18 and all youth under the age of 18 who are serving in a leadership role, must sign the Code of Ethics for Adults and Older Youth Working with Children and Youth
- All participants (including event organizers/staff) must submit completed registration forms by the registration deadline, including providing signed congregational/ associational involvement forms, and medical release forms

**exceptions*

- Youth between the ages of 12 – 13 year may, in some circumstances, be invited to participate in joint Jr. & Sr. Youth Conferences, in which case the youth to adult ratio must be increased to 6:1 and separate sleeping areas for the Junior youth are required
- Young Adults between the ages of 21 – 25 may, in some circumstances, be invited to be guest speakers or facilitators at Youth Conferences or participants in Youth Learning Conferences, if they are specifically designated as multigenerational events. In both cases, Young Adults ages 21 – 25, may not act as advisors/sponsors for other youth and must abide by all conference rules.

CUC Policy on Sexualized Behaviour at Youth Events

Sexuality is a healthy and important part of young people's lives. Youth programs are an important opportunity for youth to express themselves in healthy ways, however exclusive relationships, especially those of a romantic or sexual nature often detract from the larger community. All members of the community must respect each other's physical boundaries and the intention and purpose of Youth Events.

Inappropriate sexualized behaviour for youth events (i.e. oral, vaginal, anal or digital intercourse, and or sexual harassment of any kind) is not permitted. (In short form: Yes for consensual hugs and kisses, No touching between the neck and the knees)

The Conference Affairs Committee (or designated group) reserves the right to deem any behaviour inappropriate. Parents/guardians are invited to discuss this policy with their youth.

Breach of the above Rules and Policy at a Youth Event, may result in participants being disallowed to participate in the remainder of the event/and or being barred from attending future CUC Youth Events.

CUC Code of Ethics for Adults & Older Youth Working with Children and Youth
- adapted from the UUA Chrysalis Training Program's Code of Ethics

Adults and older youth working in leadership roles are in positions of power and authority over youth and children. Adults and older youth also play a key role in fostering the spiritual development of both individuals and the community. It is, therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions be well qualified to provide the special nurture, care, and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility.

The relationship between children or youth and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if positive potential is to be realized. The areas of growth in one's self-worth and in the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being are very important parts of childhood and adolescent development. Adults play a key role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth.

Research indicates that children, youth, adults and communities suffer damaging effects when leaders or those in positions of power and authority become romantically and or sexually involved with young persons in their care.

Therefore: leaders at CUC Events, will refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive, or erotic behaviour with children and youth. Neither shall they engage in sexually explicit conversations (unless it is part of an educational program i.e. OWL), particularly any of a personal nature, sexually harass or engage in behavior with children or youth that constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.

All leaders shall be informed of this code of ethics and asked to agree to it before assuming their role as a volunteer or staff in any program involving children and youth which are sponsored regionally or nationally by the Canadian Unitarian Council.

In the event that this code is violated at a CUC sponsored event, appropriate actions will be taken by the CUC staff (and Board as required) in consultation with the event's leadership and organizing team.

CUC Congregational Involvement Policy for Participants and Advisors

Rational

Youth events are primarily about building inclusive, religious community in the context of Unitarian Universalist values. In order for this process to happen in positive and safe ways, youth and adult participants are asked to show they already have a minimum level of involvement within the Canadian UU community before they attend over-night youth events. Youth Events, and “Cons” in particular, are intended to be welcoming spaces where youth (and adults) can be free to express their most authentic selves. In doing so, this may sometimes include being vulnerable emotionally and spiritually. Overnight youth events, including social Cons are NOT generally suited to be an “out-reach tool” as they assume a relatively high level of UU knowledge and identification on the part of the participants. Youth group meetings or other congregational events provide better opportunities for new, interested youth and adults to learn more about Unitarian Universalist youth ministry and community.

Requirements

As such, to attend a CUC Youth Event, CUC policy requires:

That all YOUTH participants interested in attending a CUC Youth Event are asked to have attended at least 3 Youth Group or program meetings at their Congregation within the last six months prior to the event or show that they have been actively involved in their congregation or at the regional/national level in other ways.

Adults interested in volunteering at a CUC Youth Event are also asked to have been attending their local congregation for at least six months prior to the event, in order to serve as an advisor at a regional or national Con or training.

In addition ADULTS wishing to act as youth advisors must also be:

- at least 25 years of age
- vetted through their local congregation’s screening process, including having personal reference checks performed and having a Criminal Record Check or Police Record Check* (CRC) done

* It is acknowledged that a CRC is valid only on the day it is completed and is therefore incumbent on the volunteer to inform their congregation (and/or the CUC) if there is a change in their criminal record. To be considered valid, a CRC must be renewed every 3 years.

Why does the CUC require Criminal Record Checks?

Serving as a Youth Advisor is a privilege. Youth advisors at CUC events, serve and minister to and with youth from around the country. As both a religious and volunteer driven organization, it is the CUC’s moral and legal duty to ensure that we provide, to the best of our abilities, a safe and nurturing experience for the young people of our community and that our volunteers to do not take on undue risks in their work on our behalf.

In order to protect both our youth and the adults who work with them, the CUC, as outlined in our *Safety in CUC Sponsored Children and Youth Programming Policy* (which was developed

as part of the Volunteer Canada's Screening in Faith Initiative) requires that volunteers (and staff) working at CUC events with children and youth, adhere to a high level of safety standards that are consistent with Canadian best practices.

Serving as a youth advisor constitutes a "high risk" position, as adults who serve in this role, have the opportunity to be alone with youth and or have power over or a position of trust with them. Obtaining a CRC in order to work with youth is considered a minimum requirement asked for throughout the educational and social service sectors, and is only one part of ensuring that adults are adequately screened. A CRC is in no way a replacement for current and thorough background checks.

Please see *Safety in CUC Sponsored Children and Youth Programming* for information about Volunteer Canada's 10 Safe Steps for mitigating risk for volunteers, as well as information about the assessment of risk use for screening volunteer at all CUC events.

CUC Conference Rules and Consequences Committee ~ Policies & Procedures
~adapted from the UUA's PNWD Conference Affairs Committee protocols

A *Conference Rules and Consequences Committee* (CRAC) (also known as a *Conference Affairs Committee* [CAC]) is convened whenever there is a need to address a serious problem that has arisen because participants have acted in ways that jeopardize the wellbeing and safety of the conference community. Most often these are issues that are not directly related to the logistical and operational aspects running the conference, but rather are of behavioral or covenantal nature.

In practice, a CRAC is generally struck to address any participants who may have broken the CUC Youth Safety Rules, and or in some other way transgressed the Conference community's covenant. In doing so the members of the CRAC are asked to respond to the participants and the issue/problem they are involved in, with considered, situational consequences.

The CRAC's purpose is not to judge or cast punishment but rather to problem solve through facilitating a "clarifying conversation" with all who are involved with the problem or transgression.

The CRAC's ultimate goals are:

- 1) maintaining the safety and wellbeing of the conference community
- 2) ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the individuals involved
- 3) facilitating a return to right relations between the individuals involved

In cases of violence and or abuse there will be zero tolerance and all adults must act as mandatory reporters of such activities.

*****Due process of the CRAC, must never preclude or delay the need to call Police or other Emergency Services immediately to deal with serious injuries or abuse.**

If such a need should ever arise, the identified lead adult (in the case of CanUudle this would be the CanUudle Coordinator) must ensure that individual participant safety is always met first, as the CRAC can address the needs of the Con community at large, concurrently and/at a later point.

Handling Consequences

Consequences chosen by a CRAC are always intended to be appropriate to the situation and tailored to the specific individuals and incidents. The hope is that both the individual(s) involved and the community as a whole will understand the relationship between the consequences and the offending behavior. The consequences that are chosen can range widely; in some situations, the CRAC conversation itself along with apologies may be all the consequences that are needed, in other situations, the appropriate consequences may include removing participants from the community (i.e. sending someone home) and recommending that those participants are denied the privilege of attending future CUC Youth events.

For all issues brought before a CRAC, the committee must file an incident report to the CUC Youth and Young Adult Ministry Development staff with 48 hours of the CRAC meeting.

Composition of the Conference Rules and Consequences Committee

Below is the minimum number of members that should sit on a CRAC:

- 2 designated YOUTH leaders from the conference staff (these roles are often filled by 1 of the Co-Deans and 1 of the Youth Chaplains)
- 2 designated ADULT leaders from the conference (this could be the identified Lead Adult of the Con, or a CUC staff person (At CanUUdle this would be the CanUUdle Coordinator or the Adult ‘Advisor’s Advisor’)
- 1 conference chaplain or minister (to provide spiritual & emotional support the persons involved)
- Additional individuals may sit on the CRAC if that seems necessary or appropriate

Individuals who might speak to the CRAC may include:

- *the person(s) who allegedly broke the conference rules*
- *the adult advisor(s) of the alleged rule breakers (in the case of a youth)*
- *the person(s) who reported the rule violation*
- *any person(s) who was directly harmed as a result of this rule violation*

Note: Every Youth Conference will have a slightly different leadership structure. Prior to the beginning of any Con, the Con staff should review these guidelines and decide on who and how many people will comprise the CRAC should the need to convene one arise.

Order of Procedure for a CRAC Meeting

A person reports a violation to a Con staff or any youth advisors. The person(s) receiving the report of the violation must make sure the Co-Dean(s) are notified of the violation. After consulting with the lead Adult, if there is reason enough for a CRAC meeting, the Co-Dean(s) must inform the appropriate persons (see above) that the CRAC will be meeting at a specified time and place.

It is very important to have the CRAC meeting as soon as possible after the violation is reported to ensure that the issue can be dealt with in a timely manner.

CRAC Decision Making Process

1. The process should be conducted with as much love, compassion, fairness and expediency as possible.
2. The group nominates someone to be the facilitator for the discussion.
3. The group appoints someone to take notes for the report to be filed to CUC Youth and Young Adult Ministry Development staff after the process is completed.
4. The facilitator outlines the process to the rest of the group.
5. The facilitator reviews the ground rules for the process:
 - a) one person speaks at a time,
 - b) no name-calling,
 - c) use “I statements,”

- d) listen while each person speaks (no side talk), etc.
6. Try to meet in a circle for more effective communication.
7. The person *reporting* the violation has five minutes to *explain the infraction* as s/he saw it. *Persons harmed by the behaviour and or other witnesses, as necessary, may also be permitted to speak.*
8. The person(s) who allegedly broke the rules then has five minutes to explain his/her/their behavior.
9. The person(s) who allegedly broke the rules, then has three minutes to ask clarifying type questions of the reporter as necessary.
10. The person reporting the violation and other CRAC members then have a further five minutes to ask questions of the alleged violator(s).

At this stage, all questions should be focused on the violation, not on the consequences.

When the CRAC has heard all the relevant information, they, minus the violator(s), the reporter(s) and any victims and/or witnesses, will discuss the facts and the issue and collectively decide on the appropriate consequences and or next steps.

*If the rule violation is such that there are direct victims, they should be given the opportunity to approve the consequences that are chosen by the CRAC before they are given out

Once the consequences are decided upon the violator(s) should be notified and after that point any announcements or apologies to the community at large should be made.

After the CRAC is concluded and the consequences have been given out, the conference Chaplain or a minister should be made available to speak with:

- the violator to make sure s/he/they understand(s) that the consequence was a response to the behavior exhibited – to the rule violation – and not to them as individual(s).
- the “victims” to offer supportive listening and help them with any processing

If a consequence is that a violator(s) is asked to leave the conference, his/her sponsor and one of the Co-Deans will immediately make the arrangements for this to happen. If parents are asked to pick up the youth, the youth will be removed from further Con activities and must stay removed from the Con community in a separate area with his/her sponsor and another assigned adult until his/her parents or guardian arrive.

Lastly the CRAC **must** ensure that the incident form is filled out and given to the CUC Youth and Young Adult Ministry Development staff within 5 days of the incident.